आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

General Editors

R. R. DIWAKAR

S. RAMAKRISHNAN

15

MAHAYOGI SRI AUROBINDO

By

R. R. DIWAKAR

MAHAYOGI
SRI AUROBINDO

Life Discipline and Teachings of Sri Aurobindo

BY

Ranganath Ramchandra Diwakar

Foreword by

DR. K.M. MUNSHI



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHOWPATTY BOMBAY

1972

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

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GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve as a background to higher education. Particular emphasis, however, would be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages.

It is the Bhavan's intention to publish the books selected not only in English, but also in the Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objective for which the Bhavan stands is the re-integration of Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge to suit present-day needs, and resuscitation of its fundamentals in their pristine vigour.

Let us make our aim more explicit.

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which will allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitation is progressively transmuted, so that man may become a better instrument of God, and be able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which good books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and

FOREWORD

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is much indebted to its friend, Shri R. R. Diwakar Governor of Bihar for writing this valuable contribution to its Book University

My own contact with Sri Aurobindo dates back to 1902 when, after matriculating, I joined the Baroda College. Though previously I had, only on occasions, had the privilege of being in personal contact with him, the Aurobindonian legend in the College filled me with reverence, and it was with awe that I hung upon his words whenever he came to College as Professor of English Subsequently we students were to be inspired by the stories of his *yogic* development. The *Bande Mataram* which he edited, was our inspiration for several years and in 1907 at the Surat meeting of the National Congress we were volunteers in the camp of the leaders, then called "Extremists of whom Aurobindo was one of the most inspiring

I closely followed Aurobindo's career during those stormy years, particularly when he was tried in the Alipore Bomb Case. His Uttarpara speech, delivered some days after his acquittal, was a perennial source of inspiration to me. After he had retired to Pondicherry I was for some years a constant reader of the *Arya* It has not been possible for me to read all his published works but whatever I have read has considerably influenced me.

My contact with Sri Aurobindo was resumed about 1945 through Dilip Kumar Roy and Sri A. B. Purani and I was privileged to receive his guidance on more than one occasion. A few months before he died, he accorded me the very rare privilege of a long interview at the Ashram.

Sri Aurobindo's life and philosophy have many facets and it is impossible to do justice to his wondrous life his profound and many-sided wisdom and achievements, not only in the field of

modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included

This common pool of literature, it is hoped will enable the reader, Eastern or Western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the Mind in India, which, though it flows through different linguistic channels has a common urge and aspiration

Fittingly the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians Sri Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, (the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by Sir H V Divatia an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy) Centuries ago it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata* "What is not in it, is nowhere After twenty five centuries we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not knows not the heights and depths of the soul he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not merely an epic it is a romance telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival but above all it has for its core the *Gita* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto

Through such books the harmonies underlying true culture we are convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

We thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful

K M MUNSHI
R R. DIWAKAR

Bombay, 1967

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world has need, is gathering at its back."

We can all see that this prophecy is today being realised.

His call to sacrifice was a new gospel. It thrilled us in the first decade of this century as nothing else did:

"Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation. Without it a nation cannot grow cannot expand. The work of national emancipation is a great and holy *yajna* of which boycott, Swadeshi, national education and every other activity, great and small, are only major and minor parts. Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice, and Motherland the goddess to whom we offer it; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the *yajna* we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest; for the Motherland is the goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the gods by a grudging giver."

"Nationalism," he said "is an *Avatar* and cannot be slain."

Then came the Alipore trial and no estimate of what the country thought of Sri Aurobindo can be better expressed than in the eloquent words which Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das addressed to the court.

"Long after this controversy is hushed in silence long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, Aurobindo will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and as the lover of humanity... his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India, but across distant seas and lands."

During the solitude of his jail-life, Sri Aurobindo received the Mandate to be the instrument of the Divine Will and his Uttarpara speech is one of the finest expressions of a spirit which had outstripped the limitations of the ordinary mind. His new message can best be summarised in his own words:

"First therefore become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan disci-

pline the Aryan character, the Aryan life Recover the Vedanta, the Gita the Yoga. Recover them not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives

From being an advocate of militant nationalism Sri Aurobindo emerged as an apostle of Aryan culture as one of the latest of a series of Masters which began with Vasistha and Vyas.

On the eve of his retirement to Pondicherry in 1910 Sri Aurobindo predicted that after a long period of war, world wide upheaval and revolution to begin in about four years India would achieve her freedom.

At Pondicherry the problem he set himself was how Divine Consciousness could be brought down, mobilized organised and turned upon life.

At the same time Sri Aurobindo became the greatest exponent of the Modern Indian Renaissance He wrote on poetry on art on social life on the progress of humanity And on every *subject he threw new light*

It is difficult to trace the life of the *Yogi* but in his message to the country on the dawn of Freedom on August 15 1947 Sri Aurobindo made a personal declaration of the aims and ideals he had conceived in his childhood and the fulfilment of which he had seen beginning

"Those aims and ideals were in their natural order these a revolution which would achieve India's freedom and her unity the resurgence and liberation of Asia and her return to the great role which she had played in the progress of human civilisation the rise of a new a greater brighter and nobler life for mankind which for its entire realisation would rest outwardly on an international unification of the separate existence of the peoples, preserving and securing their national life but drawing them together into an overriding and consummating oneness the gift by India of her means for the spiritualisation of life to the whole race finally a new step in the evolution which by uplifting the consciousness to a higher level would begin the solution of the

many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity since men began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society."

These aims and ideals he followed throughout his life with unwavering steadfastness universalising his mind, and attempting to secure the Descent of the Supermind to uplift the world. It would be presumptuous of me to attempt to describe this great adventure in spiritual thought and experience.

Suffice it to say that during the last century there has not been another thinker of Sri Aurobindo's profundity or another *yogi* who fathomed so scrupulously the mysteries of life.

Sri Aurobindo summarised the crisis through which humanity is passing in clear terms:

"At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development, while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilization which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilize and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it. At the same time Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal

pline, the Aryan character, the Aryan life Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga. Recover them *not only in intellect or* sentiment but in your lives.'

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who went through the fiery ordeal of sacrifice during the struggle for freedom, is able to put that aspect of Sri Aurobindo's life into proper perspective.

Apart from his philosophic and mystic achievements, Sri Aurobindo also played a great part in appraising the true value of Indian culture in discovering its fundamental values and their relation to the central ideas which have re-created India age after age since the Vedic times. Sri Diwakar has very rightly presented to us Sri Aurobindo's conception of India's mission in history

This book, therefore will serve as a guide to the heritage of ideas and achievements which Sri Aurobindo has left behind him. Aurobindo's writings are difficult for the beginner to study but, with the guidance of Sri Diwakar's book, he can the more easily follow the original works and so benefit from their wisdom.

Raj Bhavan,
Lucknow
12th August 1953

K.M. MUNSHI

Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements no inner *sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life unity* a mental unity or a spiritual oneness.

And he provided a solution He has rightly stressed that a perfected human world cannot be created by men who are themselves imperfect and with equal emphasis he has declared the egocentric gospel of individual liberation

What he sought to achieve was the emergence of divine life on earth, not the isolated self realization of a few individuals and if he sought divinization of the inner being he also placed in the forefront the transformation of our whole environment In his words—"To become ourselves is the one thing to be done but the true 'ourself' is that which is within us and to exceed our outer self of body life and mind is the condition for this highest being which is our true and divine being to become self revealed and active. In *The Human Cycle* he prophesies the advent of a new age when the world will be one and social conflicts and the bitterness of life will be no more—a future to which *man can look forward with hope and faith*

Sri Aurobindo presents mankind with a new hope and a new mission. He was the leader of the greatest revolt against scientific materialism which seeks to reduce man to the position of an insect. He gives a new direction to the destiny of man

Shri Diwakar's book is perhaps the most comprehensive review of the life and achievements of Sri Aurobindo published so far Coming as it does from the pen of one who has been a devoted student not only of Sri Aurobindo's writings but of our philosophy in general, the book has a value of its own

Few persons of the present generation are yet able to appreciate the value of Sri Aurobindo's contribution to India's nationalism to which between the years 1904 and 1909 he gave a new shape in form and content. Sri Diwakar himself a nationalist

INTRODUCTION

This undertaking would be, I thought, a task beyond both my ken and my capacity But one cannot anticipate how circumstances will conspire to force one into a situation in which one will act and do what is allotted as one's rightful share of work in this strange world.

I must confess, however that once I began the work, it grew upon me day by day As I went on, I realized the magnitude of the task but at the same time, I felt more and more fascinated by it. However indifferent may be the performance, I now feel gratified that I was called upon to give it. Details of the lives of great men have always attracted me and especially has this been so in the case of lives of Saints and Spiritual Guides of humanity

I have been an admirer and humble student of Sri Aurobindo since my school days. His inspiring writings in "Yugantar" "Bande Mataram" and "Karmayogin either in the original or in translation, were read by me with great avidity though, I am sure, my mind was not mature enough to fully understand their significance. But I am equally sure that it was the higher nobler and more spiritual strain in those writings that drew me towards them. Not merely his politics, but his philosophy also were like Soma to me.

I was hardly sixteen when Aurobindo retired from politics but whatever he since said or wrote has continued to hold my attention. I am happy to be the author of this brief study of his life his Sadhana, and his teachings; and to be able to give it into the hands of those persons who knew him, as well as of those who have yet to know of him.

I am fully aware that this attempt is neither an exhaustive biography nor a full picture of his inner life perhaps it might be said that it is not meant to be so. How can I claim to cap-

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ture the glory of the Himalayas, or to probe into the mysteries of its unapproachable pathways? I can only say that these few pages, indicative rather than exhaustive, stimulative rather than narrative, are suggestive rather than extensive. They are in the nature of a door to the great heritage which Aurobindo has left to posterity. This heritage is at once vast, rich, and varied. All he did, said and wrote is suffused with his unique experiences. The literature that he has left, therefore, is full of high inspiration, divine intuition and prophetic vision.

I have no doubt that Sri Aurobindo was one of those "giant spirits" which occasionally stride across this world of pygmies, shedding fresh light, giving new life and expanding the frontiers of human vision and consciousness. His has been the greatest spiritual adventure of modern times.

Man is busy expanding his knowledge of the physical world and trying to extend control over things external to himself; there is boldness, ambition and an element of engaging romance about it. All this is enchanting. Who can say that the splitting of the atom or the conquest of Mount Everest are dull and dry tasks, when even a casual account of them is thrilling in the extreme to the commonest reader? How exciting and intoxicating must be the adventure itself!

The tragedy of the present age, however, lies elsewhere. It is in the partial yet fatal neglect of our inner selves. The research of modern science in that direction has been too recent and too inadequate. A far greater effort and spirit of adventure is necessary for utilizing the spiritual knowledge already here and to explore further avenues for the control and the conquest of the inner power of consciousness. Our Everest now is not perched on the bright snow-capped tops of the majestic Himavat, but in the dimly lighted darkish chamber of our hearts. So long as man has not established Swaraj within himself and so long as his mind is swayed by passions and blind vital urges, we seek in vain the peace that should be ours, the far

mony that should reign in our affairs, and the joy that should fill our being. Aurobindo is the explorer 'par excellence' in this century of that inner realm, and I deem it a privilege to give here a glimpse into his life, eventful struggle, and ultimate triumph in cutting somewhat a new path.

It is true that it would be very difficult, if not impossible for anyone, other than himself, to write the whole story of his inner life because "it has not been on the surface for men to see." Autobiographically he once made the following remark: It is impossible to write my biography. Moreover there is no meaning in the writing of biographies of Poets, Philosophers and Yogis. The reason is they do not live in their outer actions which are visible to the people. It is quite different in the case of heroes like Napoleon, Julius Caesar and others who seek their development through action. (November 11, 1925 vide p. 115 *Dakshina*" August, 1951) But now that Aurobindo has passed on into unseen regions, and since he did not choose to write much about himself when he could have written, we have to be satisfied with what we can assemble from the stray hints and suggestions he and his closest associates have left behind. But, let it be said he has not left too little. There is perhaps more than enough to give us some sidelights on the grim fight his soul waged for the inner world in all of us, and to allow us to witness and assess the great epic role he played. Whether we realise it or not, it is out of the Vast Unknown, the Ananda of the Upanishads that we all come. It is in that Supreme Anand "we live and move and have our being" and into it again we eventually merge. We have our all too brief spell of conscious life here but we know neither the many subtler folds of consciousness nor our beginning, nor our end. And yet, we have glimpses in fortunate moments of our intimacy and integration with the uncharted ocean of Being and Becoming—and of the Purushottam—wherein both Being and Becoming find their synthesis and meaning. It is in this region of the very substance

of our existence that the spirit of Aurobindo holds the light for those who care to delve deeply into it. May he be our guide from darkness to light from falsehood to truth and from death to immortality

Now a few words about the simple scheme of the book. In the first seven chapters I have dealt more with the facts of Aurobindo's life and the gradual development of the drama of which he is the hero Chapters eight to twelve deal essentially with his Sadhana Siddhi and Teachings. Undoubtedly in my opinion increasing knowledge of his Sadhana is far more important to humanity than anything else it is of direct help to all seekers of Truth

I hope this modest effort will commend itself to all students of the Mahayogi who was in our midst but three years ago By now he must have again resumed his eternal pilgrimage

I have tried to make this biography as useful as possible by adding a few appendices, a small bibliography a glossary and *an index I must thank Sri K M Munshi President of the* Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Bombay for having agreed to have the book published for the popular *Bhavan's Book University*, and for agreeing to bring it out on the 15th of August a day consecrated and sacred in so many ways

I also take this opportunity of thanking friends who have encouraged me to write this book especially Surendra Mohan Ghose Surendra Nath Jauhar, Keshav Poddar and Nolini Kanta Gupta Thanks are also owed to Professor K K Dutt of Patna, for supplying me with some useful material and to Messrs R.S Rao P R Gadagkar and S O Potter for helping me in preparing the manuscript, and the glossary and index

R R Diwakar

Raj Bhavan,
Ranchi
10th June 1953

AUTHOR'S NOTE TO FOURTH EDITION

This is a new and revised edition of 'Mahayogi'. I never expected that my book on so difficult a subject as Sri Aurobindo would be so popular. Far less did I expect that so devoted and dedicated a soul as Mr John Farrar Winn of New Zealand, an utter stranger to me would come forward to help make this humble study of Sri Aurobindo far better than what it was in its earlier editions.

The love of this learned Englishman for Sri Aurobindo, and his passion for perfecting this biographical sketch of the great Yogi is something remarkable. He writes that he visited India about thirty two years ago when he experienced here nothing but utmost courtesy and kindness from all. He thinks that this book is inspired by the Brahmarshi and that it is the most informative and beautifully written account of Sri Aurobindo's life and works. He sees a great future for this publication because, he says, that the reputation of the Mahayogi, Sri Aurobindo is 'snow-balling' in foreign countries.

Mr Winn's insight, application and industry to improve this book is obviously due to his faith and a call from within. Is it not a happy coincidence and a proof of the universality of the Spirit that instead of an Indian, it should be a receptive and scholarly Englishman from a remote southern island who took up the task of revising the book? In the words of Mr Winn himself who took up this work in a detached and selfless spirit, his is a tribute of love to Mother India from a New Zealand Englishman who has the feel of the Spirit of India in his nervous system.

I deeply appreciate the assistance given by Mr Winn in bringing out this revised edition with a classified Index and a special note by me on the idea of the Supermind. I must also

record my thanks to Sri M P Pandit for helping me with some correct dates in Sri Aurobindo's life

I acknowledge with gratitude the help of the publishers and others who have made this edition what it is I await similar help from all for further improvement in future editions.

New Delhi
1 May 1967

R R Diwakar

NOTE TO FOURTH EDITION

It is a matter of great satisfaction that this book on Sri Aurobindo by Sri R R Diwakar which is in great demand is being published in a Fouth Edition (27th thousand)

The Author has revised the book and re-written certain passages with the help of Mr John Farrar Winn of New Zealand who offered his help and took great interest in its revision The Author as well as the Publishers are specially thankful to Mr Winn.

The Author has this time given a Classified Index and added an appendix dealing with the origin of the idea of the Super mind and the special significance attached to it.

We believe that this edition will be welcomed and also appreciated by students of Sri Aurobindo whose number seems to be multiplying fast all over the world.

THE PUBLISHERS

CHAPTER 1

TIMES AND TRENDS

LIFE may be likened to a mighty stream of intangible force pushing forward and upward, ever evolving, ever organising matter for its own purpose, and ever making its way through the encircling inert mass in which it lies involved. It expresses itself in myriad ways. At present, humanity is the acme of this vital current, the *élan vitale* and we billions of human beings are but insignificant tiny particles of spray in the multitudinous surge that flows on and on for ever.

In and through life, consciousness and mind peep at us, giving us a glimpse of the direction in which individualized psyche is proceeding on this planet. Though we can assert with some certainty the probability of life elsewhere on other planets, we cannot imagine its condition there. Conditions of matter here, however, seem to offer peculiar difficulties and the passage of life is long and arduous and often tortuous. But in spite of this, the progress of life is not insignificant, since according to scientists, it is but a few million or billion years that life-mind began its perilous yet eventful journey on earth. Moreover, there is every proof that life and mind are advancing and are likely to make new conquests. There is every hope that the next step may be as momentous a leap as the last one from the anthropoid ape to homo sapiens.

Among us, it is given to few individuals to live not merely like all others, but to remind humanity of its high destiny to find out new ways and direct its steps towards the higher planes of existence. Obviously life and mind are not the highest terms of existence. There are already intimations to human consciousness that matter, life and mind are themselves but manifestations of subtler and a far more mysterious force. Man has glimpses of it when his consciousness transcends the ego, when he

is inspired, and when he is acting through his intuition as an instrument of that force immanent in nature It is that kind of higher existence of life that everyone consciously or unconsciously is seeking Sri Aurobindo was undoubtedly one of those rare persons who have, from time to time, tried to lift humanity out of the common rut of normal life in order to raise it in the scale of evolution. His contribution to world thought has been manifold and multi-sided and of a significantly rare quality In the field of Yoga of spiritual Sadhana and attainment especially it has been fundamental and unique and in certain respects entirely revolutionary

It is said that, normally all men and women are the creatures of their time. However true this may be of the common run of people there are exceptions And Sri Aurobindo was certainly among the exceptions to an eminent degree Persons like him, while they rise out of the surrounding environment and are influenced by it are also to a very great extent the creators of their times. They are the creature-creators of history in the same sense that "The Child is father of the Man" They are influenced by circumstances in that they are not out of context but at the same time they contribute something so original and leave their impress so indelibly on the sands of time that generations follow in their footsteps and whole eras are often named after them.

It is now a recognised fact that a child's psyche is very much alive and active and absorbent even from the time it draws its very first breath And in the case of Aurobindo, it was no ordinary child as is evidenced by the precocity shown by him even in his early days. His genius as it expanded concerned itself with almost every aspect of human activity and he ultimately evolved a philosophy of life which was total and integral It is necessary to know therefore, the wind that was blowing the forces that were working and the influences that were playing around him in the days of his birth, early life and education.

From these and many other points of view and in order to understand the full significance of Aurobindo's life and actions, his ideas and Sadhana, his Siddhi and teachings, it will be very helpful to have before us an outline of the background and the general trends of his time. It will substantially aid us in relating his thoughts and actions to circumstances then prevailing.

It should be noted, however, that the background I give and the trends I indicate are not in the same form and shape as would be given by a writer of today who would see things in quite a different perspective. I shall try to reconstruct a picture in the same form in which it was present to the observers, thinkers, and reformers of those days. After all people living and acting in those times had to face problems and combat forces as they saw them and gauged them then. We today in our wisdom or folly might differ from the view that they took of things, but we cannot escape from the fact that they did take a certain view and acted upon it with certain results. Here we shall indicate the manner in which the people of those days were affected by certain facts and events and not merely state the views or facts as they were or might have been.

In this chapter the period dealt with is roughly A.D. 1858-93. This covers a total of thirty-five years, fourteen of which immediately precede the birth of Aurobindo (1872) but follow the most ruthless suppression by the government, of the heroes of the war of Independence waged by the patriotic elements that were still left in India after decades of British rule. It has often been dinned into the ears of students of Indian history by official and pro-British writers, that this war was "a mutiny" and that great atrocities were committed by the Indian soldiery. It was reserved for Indian patriots and historians who came later to assert that it was not a mutiny but a war of liberation, as sacred as was ever fought between foreign usurpers and the sons of the soil. This period also covers twenty-one years after Sri Aurobindo's birth, which includes not only the years

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mination. The British saw to it that the Princes and other forces which had opposed them were completely liquidated while those that had stood by them were rewarded but kept in such a condition that they would never be able to become a source of trouble. This does not, however mean that all opposition to British rule died down. It was only driven underground and took different shapes on different occasions. In 1863 there was a rising of the Wahabis which was half-religious and half-political in motive. Earlier in 1859 there was a big agrarian rising of indigo cultivators in Bengal. Mr Grant, the then Lieutenant-Governor expressed great surprise regarding their marvellous organisation and discipline There was a similar rising of agriculturists in Bombay province in 1874 But it must be admitted that there was nothing "all-India" about these sporadic risings. Nor can one call them political so much as economic. These apart, there were some smouldering embers here and there and certainly a few bold and defiant spirits who dreamt of a future revolution. Undoubtedly it was they who formed the nucleus of some of the revolutionary attempts of the future. But it can be safely said that there was nothing on the horizon nor below it in the way of an organised violent movement which could be taken seriously by the British rulers as something worthy of consideration or of strong action.

On the other front namely that of public opinion and constitutional agitation, the Indian National Congress was born in 1885 (only eight years before Aurobindo's return from England) But prior to its birth, there were three separate associations already functioning in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Public opinion often expressed itself, though very mildly through the medium of these bodies, as well as through newspapers, of which there were already more than five hundred by that time By 1883 however public-spirited men working in the three provincial bodies together with some others, felt that they should have an all-India platform which could be called truly national, that

of his childhood but also those he spent in England for his education. It was only in 1893 that he returned to India and settled down in Baroda till his final departure for Calcutta (1906) thirteen years later. Although Aurobindo did show some signs of patriotic activity while in England, it is proper that active preparation for his career in India should be counted from the date of his stay in Baroda. This is why I have chosen the period 1850-93.

It will be more convenient to deal separately with the political, economic, religious and social, educational and cultural fields while considering this period. It may help readers to note that I am dealing not so much with calendar dates as with forces and influences that were moving in this vast country in those days. They were the same and almost uniform throughout the country mainly because the whole of India was under the iron heel of the British except where titular Kings and Maharajahs were allowed to carry on a kind of autonomous rule in their respective States. There the joys and sorrows of the people swayed according to steps adopted by the individual rulers. Even in the States called Indian India in contrast to British India the shadow of British rule was thick and no breath of free movement was allowed to stir. A common bond of slavery, a uniform code of laws, a common pattern of bureaucratic rule all gave to India a unity under the British which was helpful to India in forging a unity of interest and in organising a common fight for freedom.

The British forces emerged triumphant and gained full control after the last Indian military defeat in 1857. Callous repression followed, tempered only by a distant promise of good and beneficent rule and an immediate attempt to make the administration firm and efficient. Indian military forces were completely disintegrated and there was no immediate prospect of any future rising. Nationwide emasculation followed as a result of the disarming of all citizens almost without any discri

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demanded freedom as its birthright. It was intensely conscious of a mission and of India's destiny in the world. This spirit was the precursor of a great national mass awakening which ultimately trampled under foot all opposition from inside as well as outside and triumphed over all forces that stood in the way of its onward march to freedom.

Now to the economic field.

The British, who came to India as traders, fought like adventurers, intrigued like consummate politicians and ultimately stumbled upon an empire vaster than that of Asoka and richer than that of the Moghuls. But the shrewdest of them were never enamoured of the "empire" aspect. Although sometimes they indulged in shows incidental to all empires, they did so because it was necessary and not because they loved or liked it. The trader in them never died, nay that attitude was fostered and they flourished on it. They thought constantly in terms of rupees, annas and pies. Napoleon, always busy building empires, contemptuously called the English a nation of shopkeepers. He lost his empire in no time but the British kept their shopkeeping and remained safe and prosperous.

Thus economic exploitation was the dominating motive throughout the period of British occupation. The industrial revolution in England helped and accelerated the process. The British began to look upon India as a supplier of raw material and upon her vast population as the consumer of goods manufactured in England. In the fulfilment of this objective, they were ruthless and remorseless. During the process, a number of flourishing industries in India either perished or languished and thus made room for imports. Neither industry nor shipbuilding was encouraged in India. The main strings of commerce and banking were held by British merchants and firms. Thus India continued to become poorer and poorer and the pressure on the land increased enormously. Railways and other communications were developed, either from the point of view of military security or

is non-sectional and non-communal. Congress was the result. The people in authority in those days encouraged it for their own reasons and it developed into an annual forum for ventilating political as well as other grievances against the government of the day Though avowal of loyalty was for many many years, a regular feature of the proceedings, protests and strongly worded resolutions were also not wanting But the youth of the country was not very satisfied with this kind of petitioning and barren resolutions. The result was that slowly impatient extremism began to make itself felt in the country

Thus, though patriotism that expressed itself in violence was hardly in existence, there was a slow but sure rise of a generation which resented foreign rule along with all its denationalising effects. National sentiment of the Italian and Irish brands was making headway If some were stirred by economic evils, there were others like Aurobindo who thought that whatever else happened, foreign rule must end at any cost. Young and ardent spirits realized that there was no scope for them and no hope even of serving their country to capacity under the blighting conditions that existed. Generally speaking the superiority complex of the British their patronizing attitude, their utter contempt of things Indian, their gross ignorance about India, all contributed to the speedy spread of a deep sense of national insult. In other spheres of life came a new awakening and a stir of consciousness concerning India s great past which strengthened the forces of aggressive nationalism. People were no longer satisfied with sending petitions and passing resolutions and leading deputations. They began to hanker after action. This deep dissatisfaction led to great political movements in India beginning with the protest against Bengal Partition in 1906 and ending with "Quit India in 1942 Aurobindo almost instinctively identified himself with the rising generation which was more than impatient about the slow methods of Congress. It drew its inspiration from a basic national consciousness which

in Hinduism itself. Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had already made his appearance. All the sponsors of reformist movements based on western patterns had sat up in amazement There were movements like those of Brahmo Samaj and Prarthana Samaj, which sought to reform Hinduism on some kind of Christian pattern Many of the English-educated had already taken to the new forms. But Shri Ramakrishna s Sadhana as well as Siddhi had proved beyond all doubt that it is necessary to have a tolerant attitude and a sympathetic outlook in matters of religion that all religions have the same truth as their foundation, and that Hinduism Yoga and devotion were quite adequate to take a man to the highest reaches of consciousness. It was Ramakrishna with his simple teachings and his mass and class following as well as his distinguished disciple Narendra (the future Vivekananda, who was to be the first missionary of Vedanta to the West) who rehabilitated Hindu philosophy both in India and abroad. Above all the comprehensive nature of Ramakrishna s teaching, its inclusiveness its humanity and universality appealed to everyone irrespective of nationality, religion caste, creed, or sex.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj was responsible for another drive which had already made its effective appearance against Christian as well as Islamic onslaught on Hindu religion and philosophy His was a double mission defence against attack from outsiders and attack against what he believed to be evils which had grown in Hinduism. His approach was patriotic and nationalistic in essence but at the same time he was a social reformer of no mean order While he defended Hinduism with the might of a Titan, he had his sledge always ready against what he thought were mere accretions to pure Vedic and Aryan Hinduism. He attacked all kinds of idolatry and had no kind word for the Puranas and the Pauranic gods. The Arya Samaj reverted to the Vedas, the daily Homa (sacrifice), and the four Varnas as against the hundreds of castes

current in those as well as in these days. He laid the greatest possible stress on Brahmacharya and character-building and encouraged the ancient system of education through residential Ashramas. Sanskrit teaching also received a great stimulus from the Arya Samaj.

Thus the first phase of admiration of Christianity and a tendency to reform Hinduism on that pattern had passed away. Patriotic admiration and respect for what was good in religious thought in India had already taken its place. The accretions and overgrown evils were marked off from the original basic elements, spiritual, philosophical and social. Aurobindo's approach was more along the lines of Ramakrishna's teachings than any other school of thought current in those days. The difference however is obvious. Aurobindo had a vast background of knowledge and experience of western thought and religion that Ramakrishna lacked. But in his instinctive sympathy with all that is high and noble in Indian spirituality in intuitive appreciation and realization of it and in the adoption of a truly spiritual and synthetic attitude toward all religions and human endeavour in that field, Aurobindo is nearer to Ramakrishna than all other Indian thinkers and reformers. Ramakrishna does not seem to have had any special ideas or theory of social reform. His conduct was based on Vedantic as well as Tantric truths and he looked upon all human beings as equal and thus worthy of respect. His worship of Kali, the Mother Goddess, as Shakti was the key to the respect shown by him and his followers to women.

In the educational field a step fatal to Indian ideals and indigenous learning was taken when a new policy was laid down according to the famous minutes of Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay. There was a complete break in tradition and a departure was made in favour of a merely intellectual and so called liberal type of western education, in which mastery of the English language occupied the most predominant place. Everything else was subordinated. The old system languished, both

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scant recognition. What was more distressing was the fact that they had no place in the whole of the educational system. The educated emerged from their schools and colleges quite innocent of the art treasures of their own land and, what was worse, with a very crude and distorted taste for cheap western substitutes.

While this was the general deplorable condition, it should be said to their eternal credit that, some English and other western scholars and art-critics tried to rehabilitate the literary and cultural values of Sanskrit and to preserve the treasures to be found in other Indian languages as also in the fine arts and crafts of India. It was they together with some Indians, who were pioneers in the renaissance. Aurobindo was among the leading spirits who recognised the renaissance and lent his powerful pen to the cause when he began to take part in public life.

Thus, on the whole, during this period, though a military victory had given the British a tighter grip; though they had evolved a strong administrative machinery though the new educational system sought to create and plant a new race of English-educated brown-British" people in the midst of a vast Indian population; though everything Indian, whether it was art or religion language or philosophy was a matter for neglect and derision, a strong and powerful but peaceful reaction had already set in. In all fields of human activity there were men of faith and vision who were successfully attacking all evil from outside and at the same time trying to salvage whatever was good and noble and healthy in things Indian. They were trying to strike new lines of progress on the basis of Indian tradition. Thus the renaissance had begun. Fortunately for India, most of the workers in all fields were alive to what was good in the west and tried to adopt it without any narrow and blind feelings about the superiority of everything Indian just because it was Indian.

Now a few words about the forces working in the world during this period. India, though seemingly a geographically

Hindu and Muslim, as all recognition, patronage, and encouragement was extended only to the new type of teaching The result was the production of a new class of intellectuals, learned in English but without any traditional background. This created a new caste of people in India, who sought the patronage of the rulers. Being ignorant of their great heritage they had no love for the thoughts and ideas, customs and manners either of their contemporaries in society or of their forefathers and parents. It was thus class of people who were Indian in form but completely denationalized in everything else. Sometimes they were referred to as the Manas-putras (psychological progeny) of the West. The choice of English as the medium of education also effectively blocked the growth of the many regional languages. Thus Sanskrit which was the basis and source of inspiration for all Indian languages was thrown into the background and other languages were left to their respective fates. Both in the capital, and in the provinces, English was established as the official language It became the language of courts, of high schools and of the universities The growth and progress of all Indian languages was thus checked both in official quarters and in the field of education.

What happened to education, naturally happened to all indigenous arts and culture. Generally speaking the rulers had no love of local art and culture except by way of admiration as curios. The curse of imperialistic tendencies asserted itself everywhere. Sometimes there was recognition of Indian art but that was more from the point of view of highbrow patronage than from the point of view of appreciation of intrinsic or superior merit. Painting, music, sculpture and literature were utterly neglected as also a hundred other crafts like ivory-carving and work in sandal wood, which require both imagination and a high degree of hand-skill. It was only at the courts of the Rajahs and Maharajahs who had not fallen prey to indiscriminate westernization that these arts were kept alive and received

democratic and modern republican ideas had been thrown open. The idea of liberty and equality for all citizens, the consciousness of fundamental rights such as freedom of conscience opinion, expression, and association filled the atmosphere.

There was another very important development in the political world and that was the birth of modern nationalism. In the hands of Guiseppe Mazzini, the great Italian patriot, it evolved a new type of regional religion which supplied great fervour and zeal to freedom movements everywhere He can be truly called "the prophet of nationalism" Each people, he said, has a duty to perform and a destiny to fulfil in the world and they must do it. Freedom from foreign rule he added, is the first condition of being able to do so. By "each people" he meant a group or groups of people living together in a geographical area and bound by ties of race language, culture, and by common history common memory common suffering and above all by common economic, social, and political interests. This idea emphasises the common interests of people living within certain defined territorial boundaries. It has the effect of converting a merely geographical expression in the form of a country into a mass of people awakened to their common interests and bound by a bond of brotherhood based on as many natural common ties as possible This great idea has at some time or other during the course of the last century profoundly influenced almost every country and every people in the world. In fact recently every political awakening of people in different countries has been due to the urge of modern nationalism. That in essence is the basis of the democratic principle of self-determination and autonomy

The two countries of the continent of Europe whose fight for freedom inspired Indian patriots more than any other are Ireland and Italy In both countries, it was the spirit of nationalism that stirred the people to almost superhuman sacrifice for the sake of freedom. Love of one's own language, of one's

closed entity has, since the very dawn of history, been in close touch with several other countries and had exchanges with the thought currents of the world This contact might at times have been meagre, these exchanges might often have been slight but the fact that they were there cannot be denied and is significant.

It is well known that in India s pre-history and early history she traded both by land and by sea with the Phoenicians and was in contact with Egypt, Babylon and Persia Later, her contacts with Greece and Rome and the Arab countries were far closer Along with merchandise, there is no doubt that ideas were exchanged on a big scale. After the advent of Buddhism, and especially after the evolution of Mahayana Buddhism India s contact with Tibet and China continued without break for several centuries The names and languages the mighty architectural and sculptural remains in the big and small islands of South East Asia are living proof of India s contact with the Far East. It is no wonder that she is so rich in her heritage She has always acted and reacted to outside and foreign influences and has never lived in complete seclusion or isolation She has never shown a fanatical abhorrence of things foreign which usually results in sealing one s own frontiers. The consequence in such cases is stagnation, physical mental and spiritual.

The period under consideration has been chosen as I have already pointed out mainly with reference to the biography of a great person and therefore it has no direct relation with any particular period of history But we can easily see what great ideas and forces were working in the world round about that time

In the world of political ideas, the declaration of American Independence in 1776 and the bursting of the French Revolution in Europe in 1789 had brought about radical changes. Monarchy, feudalism, colonialism, autocratic aristocratic oligarchic or arbitrary rule, rule without the consent of the governed, had all been shaken to their roots. The flood-gates of

call given to "the workers of the world" to unite and strike and bring about a new millennium. Though this philosophy did not begin to operate as an active force in Russia until the formation of the Lenin-Stalin axis, it was clear that the days of *laissez-faire* in the industrial and economic field were as certainly over as were autocracy and aristocracy in politics and birthrights and class privileges in the social sphere.

While the western world was surrounded by these new and various forces and ideas, renascent India was re-shaping herself. The difference was that India was not exposed directly to these forces since she was under political and economic domination. It was only through England and mainly through the English language that she was influenced by the then current of world thought.

It was at a time when these were the contending and operative forces that Sri Aurobindo made his appearance. Now that the outlines of the picture, present to the youthful and patriotic spirits of those days, is before us, a fuller understanding of Aurobindo's approach and attitude and appreciation of his line of thought and action, is far easier

CHAPTER II

ENVIRONMENT AND PARENTAGE

CHAPTER I outlines general trends in the way of life and thought in India, as well as in the world, during the period 1858-1893. Now let us have a cursory look at the picture of Bengal, Aurobindo's immediate environment at the time of his birth and during his early life, that is, from about 1872 to 1880.

During the Indian Renaissance already in full swing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century great personalities contributed their mite to the general awakening in every field of Indian thought. They created a new outlook. The first wave of

own culture, of one's country's manufactures, love of the sons of the soil. Herculean efforts to revive past arts and traditions, serious attempts to understand their own genius and to foster legitimate pride in their past, these were the forms that nationalism took in those two countries. In India new-born nationalism also took a similar course. The names of Gamon De Valera and Michael Collins of Ireland and of Mazzini and Garibaldi of Italy were favourites with young and budding nationalists in India for many many years.

In the field of economics, the invention of the steam engine and the development of electric power together with the progress of modern science had already paved the way for what is popularly known as the Industrial Revolution. The whole of the economic and social structure in Europe and America was undergoing a profound change. England was the leading power in this matter and it so happened that the British were ruling India. If India had been a free country and had adopted western methods as Japan did, what the course of Indian history would have been is a matter for idle conjecture. But what actually happened was that the industrial advance of England meant ironically enough, the exploitation of India as a market for buying raw materials and for selling finished goods. We know what dire consequences ultimately followed this process. But apart from this, the use of power for mechanical manufacture as well as for transport and communications the advance of mechanical engineering and technology the advance of science on the whole, brought about very fundamental changes in the means of production and distribution. The immediate result was concentration of wealth as well as distributive power in the hands of a few and the massing of labour and the proletariat in a few industrial centres. This led to the birth of socialistic ideas when the masterly minds of Marx and Engels built up a philosophy based upon pure materialism and on the play of forces without a soul. The Communist Manifesto, published in 1848 was a clarion

kind of zeal to make a supreme effort to rise and march ahead, and to throw themselves open to new thought and modern sciences. They embodied in different degrees and in different fields of activity the very spirit of newly-awakened India. Most of them were scholars of note. Many of them had studied Sanskrit and the past history of India. They had reverence and admiration for the valuable traditions of India and they had respect for the West and its modern achievement. They loved India and her people intensely. They felt that India's future lay in assimilating and adapting the teaching of the West, in re-building her life on the firm and unshakable foundations of her great and ancient past, and in casting away irrational and meaningless accretions.

In Bengal, Raja Ram Mohan Roy had long ago led the way in the matter of English Education and social reform. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar had strongly advocated female education. As usually happens in the case of national awakening, consciousness of one's own language is the first to stir a people. Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee were pioneers in this matter in Bengal. Later Rabindranath Tagore who was to render invaluable service to Bengali as well as to English, came to be known as the Poet of Asia. In the field of religious reform, Devendra Nath Tagore and Keshub Chandra Sen were the pillars of the Brahmo movement, though later schismatic tendencies developed. But the profoundly spiritual Paramahamsa,(Gadadhar) Rama Krishna and his powerful and eloquent disciple Swami, (Narendra) Vivekananda established the supremacy of Vedanta and the Yoga systems and stabilized what was best in the traditional ways of worship and devotion. Vivekananda especially revivified the missionary spirit which took Vedanta and Yoga to distant lands. In the field of art, Havell and Abanindra Nath Tagore led the way and put on firm footing the Indian style of painting. In the field of science the names of Profulla Chandra Ray and Jagdish Chandra Bose became household words. Thus, we see that in the last quarter of the

unqualified admiration for everything British and western and the inferiority complex which characterized the first two or three generations of the English-educated Indians had subsided It was realized that the wholesale substitution or transplantation of any western language thought and culture was neither practicable nor desirable nor necessary It was generally conceded that a solid substratum in many fields existed in India but that it stood in need of restatement, reorientation and revitalization in the light of modern thought and science. A great deal of what was entirely new to India, especially modern science, stood in need of being adapted to Indian conditions. The historical perspective, the nationalistic outlook, the modern democratic spirit, the scientific approach and method were some of the most important things in the modern world that impressed the leaders and prominent public-spirited men of India. In fact, almost every progressive thinker had come to the conclusion that India was a very congenial field for systematic fusion of what was best in the East and the West For various reasons, Bengal had contributed much to the universal renaissance in India, and Bengal was the province in which Aurobindo was born He later chose that itself as the field for his most active public life

The names of a few of the important personages who initiated new trends in renascent Bengal and not a few of them subsequently in the whole of India will give us some idea of the atmosphere there at the time Before dealing with Bengal we should pause to pay homage to some great souls in other parts of India. Mrs. Annie Besant Subramanya Iyer Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, K. T Telang M G Ranade G K Gokhale Lokamanya B. G Tilak, Swami Dayananda Saraswati Lala Lajpat Rai, Dadabhai Naoroji, Phirozeshah Mehta, Ananda Coomaraswamy as well as many others from different provinces had contributed substantially to the reawakening of the soul of renascent India. They were pioneers who stirred the spirit of nationalism by invoking the glories and achievements of the past, by infusing in the people a new

worthy to be reckoned in the history of India with such men of old as Kalidas, Chaitanya, Jayadev Tulsidas, and Shankaracharya and destined in the future to shine clear as the first glowing sparks sent out in the fiery turmoil where old and new were fusing." While writing about Indian Nationalism, Ramsay Macdonald in his "*Government of India*" observes, "it is the revival of a historical tradition, the liberation of the soul of a people." Mrs. Annie Besant remarked, it is "not a plant of mushroom growth but a giant of the forest with millennia behind it." While speaking about Rabindra Nath Tagore's poetry Ramsay Macdonald himself burst into poetic language and said, "Tagore's poetry is India. It is the soul of a people not merely the emotion of a man, a systematic view of life, not merely a poetic mood a culture, not merely a tune."

With equal emphasis it should be said that this new spirit was neither selfish nor parochial nor national in a narrow sense. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu in paying a compliment to Ram Mohan Roy remarked "And Raja Ram Mohan Roy conveyed the message of this great civilization to the world. He had no exclusion. He had the all-inclusiveness which is characteristic of the universal quality of the mission of India." Swami Vivekananda on the 20th of September 1896 wrote to one of his disciples from London, "You must not forget that my interests are international and not Indian alone." Mahatma Gandhi later emphasised, "Our nationalism can be no peril to other nations inasmuch as we will exploit none as we will allow none to exploit us. Through Swaraj we would serve the whole world."

While this was the nature of the renaissance and of the general atmosphere it is strange that Sri Aurobindo's father Krishna Dhan Ghose became a confirmed believer in everything western though earlier he was inclined towards Brahmo Samaj. He came from a noted family of Konnagar village in the Hooghly district only eleven miles from Calcutta. He chose to study medicine and went to England for that purpose. In spite, how-

nineteenth century, Bengal was in the forefront of the renaissance in almost every field of activity None could have escaped the vibrant atmosphere that was redolent with new life new trends and new hopes.

True renaissance begins with self-discovery leading to self realization and to the full expression of the soul of a nation. It is true that comprehensive impact with the West especially through England and the English language, the progress of political thought the stirring achievements of nationalism, and the dazzling triumphs of science, had helped to fill the mind of the educated Indian with ideas of national freedom, civil liberty, and material progress. But one should not mistake this alone as the spirit of the renaissance that was bestirring the very soul of India. The genuine urge was deeper it yearned for liberation not merely from the foreign yoke which was but the result of inner weakness, but also from the bondage of all that was dross, and from the encrustations of centuries, so that the Soul of India might shine resplendent in its full and innate glory Freedom from British rule was but a part of the urge.

This spirit was encouraged and enlivened by the researches of great western and Indian scholars such as Monier Williams, Sir William Jones, Horace Hayman Wilson, Henry Colebrook, Roth, Schlegel Bopp, Max Muller and others. No less distinguished were scholars like Rajendra Lal Mitra, Bhau Daji Bhandarkar, R C. Dutt, Mani Shankar Jata Shankar B G Tilak and Swami Dayananda to name but a few

Testimony is given by many writers, both Indian and foreign, that the Indian renaissance was neither superficial nor a passing wave. It was as if ' Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of the wat erspouts" (Vide pp. 42 × 7). R.W Frazer in his *Literary History of India'* ,(pp 446-447), significantly observes, 'Men such as Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen, Michael Madhusudan Dutt Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Kashinath Trimbak Telang are no bastard bantlings of a western civilization, they were creative geniuses

a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, and one steeped almost equally in the knowledge of Vedant, Islam and Western thought. In a way he was a composite of the various currents of culture which were influencing India but with a predominance of Vedantic spirituality. He was a very close student of the Upanishads. He spoke eloquently at meetings and wrote on occasions. His speech on "*Hindu Dharmer Shreshthata*" was assessed by Bipin Chandra Pal to be very powerful advocacy. He succeeded Devendranath Tagore as President of the Calcutta Brahmo Samaj.

Srimati Swarnalata was an educated lady capable of writing stories and dramatic pieces. But her powers could hardly find any opportunity of development in later days as she became a victim of a family malady. Sometimes, she became violent and beat her children. But she retained the religious bent and devoutness of her father throughout her life. Krishna Dhan Ghose and Swarnalata Devi were married in 1864 when they were nineteen and twelve respectively. The marriage was a mingling so to say of the then prevailing forces in the life-current of Bengal. Ultimately however it was the latter force represented by Rishi Rajnarayan Bose that predominated. If one can so describe him, Sri Aurobindo was a symbol of the spirit-dominated awakened power of India in the field of karma, Bhakti, and Jnan.

CHAPTER III

BIRTH, EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

The third son of Krishnadhan Ghose and Swarnalata Devi, Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta in the year 1872. At 4-50 a.m., on 15th August, the new child first drew breath. It was a date which had already been consecrated by the Mahasamadhi of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Aurobindo once explained

ever, of a stern warning not to be led away by the glamour of western civilization from Rishi Raj Narayan Bose, his devout father-in-law, Dr K.D Ghose returned to India an atheist, wholly Anglicized and denationalized. He became a votary of England, of English education, English customs, English manners, and English methods. After his return (in 1871) from Aberdeen, Scotland, where he had secured his M D degree he was asked to perform *prayaschitta* (purification or expiation) He refused and showed moral courage in preferring to leave the village after selling his property at a loss. But he seemed to have some regard for his orthodox mother After her death he spent about a thousand ruppees in Banaras according to her wishes. But his innate humanity and feeling for the suffering of others was very great and almost amounted to a religion. Throughout his career he spared neither effort nor money in trying to relieve those who suffered He served as the Civil Surgeon in three districts and was popular by reason of his public-spirit his sense of service, and his concern for the poor His work in Bhagalpur, Rangpur, and Khulna was remembered for many years. His later years however, were made unhappy and he was embittered to a certain extent by domestic difficulties; his wife s hysteria want of sufficient resources as well as a certain amount of personal laxity

To the end of his life, however Aurobindo s father s views about things Indian remained unchanged. He pitied and at times ridiculed everything Indian while his praise of all that was English and western was boundless. This tendency developed in him to such an extent that when the question of educating his children arose, he chose to put them into convent schools and at the earliest, sent them to England ! Aurobindo was only seven when taken to England

As if to counteract this extreme and almost irrational love of the West while in the medical college, Dr Ghose married Swarnalata Devi, the eldest daughter of Rishi Rajnarayan Bose,

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the spiritual significance of the 15th of August. He remarked, "15th of August has a special significance—it is the day of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary; it implies that the physical nature is raised to the Divine Nature. The Virgin Mary refers to Nature, Jesus is the divine soul born in man—he is the son of God as well as the son of man (P 4, "*Mother India*, August 1952) This date was to become memorable from 1947 as the day of India's independence. The name "Aravinda", or Aurobindo (which means lotus) was chosen by his father because it was unique at that time and rarely given to any one. It was found decades later, that there were a few persons bearing that name But now it is quite commonly given not only to children but also to numerous public bodies and institutions!

Very little is known about the prodigy's early childhood which was spent with his parents in Khulna. But it is known that his father who was a confirmed 'pucca sahib' in every sense of the word did not engage Bengali-speaking servants. Servants were required to speak in English or in Hindi! He also saw that Aurobindo, together with his two elder brothers, Benoy Bhushan Ghose and Mano Mohan Ghose was sent to a preparatory *school which was wholly European* It was the Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling conducted by Irish Nuns for European children and the medium of instruction was English. Not a minute was allotted to teaching any Indian language! Thus Aurobindo and his brothers had only English children as companions and English as the language of communication both in the boarding house and in school Is it any wonder that Aurobindo had to learn Bengali, his mother tongue almost entirely afresh after his return from England to Baroda in 1893? He managed to have only a smattering of it earlier when he was appointed as probationer after passing the Indian Civil Service examination.

Unfortunately even at this time Swarnalata was subject to hysterical attacks which sometimes made her violent Her children used to spend the vacations either at Khulna or at Deogarh

with their maternal grandparents. Aurobindo remembered hardly anything of those days. But one dream he had at Darjeeling, which he did remember is significant. One night while asleep, a mass of darkness came rapidly towards him, encircled him and entered into him. While in England, this experience repeated itself sometimes and was only dispelled when he returned to India in 1893. He then had quite another experience of infinite calm which stayed with him for a long time.

The three boys had been at school for barely two years when, in 1879 their parents took them along with their younger sister Sarojini to England for education. Dr Krishnadhan seemed bent on giving his children a training that would make them products of the best kind of English education, without giving the least insight into Indian life and culture. It was during this stay in England that Barindra Kumar Ghose, Aurobindo's youngest brother was born to Swarnalata. (His lawyers sought to use the fact of his being born in England as a point of vantage later at his trial in the Alipore Bomb Case in 1908).

Aurobindo's two elder brothers were entered at the Manchester Grammar School, while he, who was hardly seven, was entrusted to the parental care of a Congregational or 'Protestant' clergyman and his wife a Mr and Mrs. William Drewett. Mr W. H. Drewett was a capable Latin scholar and found in the young Indian a very willing and intelligent student. As all tuition was given at home, the young scholar found time to read the Bible, and Shakespeare Shelley and Keats among other authors. He had then no inclination either towards religion or philosophy. The Drewetts were instructed that the child was not to meet Indians and was not to be acquainted with Indian culture and affairs! A mild attempt was made by Mrs. Drewett to have Aurobindo baptised as a Christian, but her husband discouraged it. When in England as a student Aurobindo was known as Aravinda Acroyd Ghose as he was for a time in the charge of a teacher by name Mr Acroyd! But later Aurobindo dropped the name

although his father had liked it very much.

Aurobindo learned Latin quickly and progressed very rapidly When after the departure of the Drewetts to Australia in 1885, he was entered at St. Paul's School in London, the then headmaster Dr Frederick William Walker was surprised at the precocity of the child and very lovingly began to teach him Greek on his own initiative. Aurobindo's progress in that great language was astonishing: it made his promotion to higher classes easy as well as quick.

It is obvious, from the record of progress that he made at school especially in mastering English Latin and Greek at so young an age, that Aurobindo was extraordinarily intellectual and his capacity for learning languages very marked Though not much mention is made of the qualities of his heart and of his character, it is known that he was very gentle and loving and seldom assertive or aggressive. His was more of a retiring and reserved temperament than one given to too much social mixing and gaiety He was a sober scholar absorbed in the world of ideas and ideals. To describe him as a contemplative at that age may seem to be too much of an exaggeration but it is definite that his tendencies lay that way It should be noted in this connection that at about the age of thirteen he suddenly felt an inner urge to shed all selfishness and his attempts at self-sacrifice date from this early age

While under the foster-care of the Drewetts in Manchester and later when attending St. Paul's College in London, the child scholar distinguished himself by his superior intellectual ability and gentle amiable character On the strength of these natural endowments, at the end of his four years stay at St. Paul's in 1889 at the tender age of seventeen he was successful in securing a senior classical scholarship for entry to King's College Cambridge. Its value was £ 80 per annum. Immediately after his entry his talents were discovered by Oscar Browning, then a noted figure at the University

While in Manchester and during his early years at St. Paul's, we have seen that Aurobindo gave special attention to the study of Classics and the English language. But later when he had become quite confident about his class studies, he extended the scope of his reading to literature and other general subjects, bestowing particular care on reading English and French literature and the whole history of Europe. He also devoted some time to the study of Italian and German. But what is more important and remarkable is that he spent a great deal of time in composing poetry when only fourteen. His "*Hecuba*" seems to have been admired very much by Lawrence Binyon.

In spite of this diversion from school and college studies, however he won all the prizes for the year in King's College for Greek and Latin verse. This in itself speaks for the ease with which he handled classical languages even at that age and while in a distant British university. This is proof, if proof is wanted, of his extreme precocity as well as of his ability to enter into the spirit of the ancient languages of Europe. This then was the high level of special proficiency he gained in Greek and Latin. Let us now see how he fared with his regular and prescribed course of studies.

He passed with a first class distinction, the First Part of the Tripos at King's College. The degree of B.A. is normally given after passing this First Part, but only if the examination is taken in the third year. In Aurobindo's case however he had only two years at his disposal after joining the college he therefore saw to it that he passed the examination. In such a case to qualify for the degree the student has to appear for the Second Part of the Tripos in the fourth year. Another way to obtain the degree is by making application for it. But obviously Aurobindo did not care to do this as he had no intention of pursuing an academic career at the University.

At the instance of his father and without the help of a tutor he passed with distinction the open competition for the Indian

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entered St. Paul's School in London and was finally admitted at King's College, Cambridge in January 1890. Out of the twenty one years of his life, he had spent fourteen in England, some in an English household and others in London and Cambridge boarding houses. Thus the most impressionable years of Aurobindo's early life were lived either in England or in English surroundings in India. Furthermore, during those years, he was engaged in studying English and other classics of ancient and modern European languages. He had not yet begun to study any philosophy Greek or German or Indian. He had read only Plato's "*Republic*" and "*Symposium*". His study of Heraclitus and Sanskrit as well as of many other subjects was subsequent to his return to India. His early years were spent in an atmosphere suffused with a love of everything British and European, as we know there was no love lost between his father and things Indian. It was out of this environment, or perhaps as a strong reaction to it, that a most powerful and eloquent voice in "*A Defence of Indian Culture*" issued forth from Aurobindo in later years. But he was singularly free from any dislike of the West. On the contrary he was full of love and appreciation of certain aspects of western culture and civilization. His was the approach of a fully mature man of catholic sympathies and comprehensive outlook. It was not merely the voice of an advocate of the East but it was of one who while upholding the East, pleaded in the best interests of humanity itself, for an integral synthesis of the East and the West. He loved the spiritual East but equally admired the vital West. In his eyes, matter and materialism were but aspects of the Spirit itself. He believed that real fulfilment and perfection of man lay in the scientific development of a real evolutionary spirituality which would not only revolutionize the spiritual outlook and inner life but also transform outer life and material existence.

Apart from Aurobindo's academic and other studies, it is interesting to peep into the working of his mind and to note

Civil Service. But he had not paid any attention to the necessity of being able to ride a horse and as a result, failed to take the riding test. A second chance is given often enough, especially when the student is otherwise brilliant. This distinguished student was certainly given a chance to try again. But apparently he did not care to undergo the test. When he came to know the result, of not passing a test in riding, he informed Benoy, his brother, and together they played cards and smoked away the failure. Mano Mohan, his other brother, took the failure seriously and rebuked both for being so frivolous. Although the father had marked his son for a career in the I.C.S., Aurobindo did not appear to have cared much for the idea. In fact the presumption is that he deliberately evaded the riding test so that he might avoid the obligation of pursuing the official career! He was destined to fulfil quite a different mission. Presumably it was the call of that mission which cleared his path of all impediments.

Thus by 1893, at the age of twenty-one, so far as his studies and intellectual equipment were concerned, Aurobindo had not only mastered the English language but also Latin and Greek, the two richest classical languages of Europe. He was however still almost a stranger to his mother tongue and to all other Indian languages. He had made fair acquaintance with the then most important European languages, French, Italian, and German. His command of English and classical languages was extraordinary. He was composing in English fairly good poetry and had proved to his teachers that he could compose with ease in Greek and Latin. He had passed the Tripos with distinction and, with the exception of riding, had done remarkably well in the I.C.S. competitive examination. The first two years of student-life were spent as a boarder at a convent school in Darjeeling in the midst of beautiful Himalayan surroundings and in the company of British children. Later, he was for a number of years under the parental care of the Drewetts in Manchester. He then

some incidents and trends of thought which influenced him during his stay in England They are mostly to be deduced from the kind of life he led, from his poems and other writings, and from his activities at that time.

Though his father cannot be said to have been a religious man in the ordinary sense of the term, we have seen that he was truly religious in another sense In additon to serving his patients he would often spend all his money on them He carried this to such extremes that on occasions, he was unable to send regular remittances to his children in England. Sometimes this resulted in great hardship to Aurobindo and his brothers and gave them a good foretaste of poverty and want But they would always suffer in silence rather than complain about their plight. He and his brothers often had no winter overcoats and sometimes had to go without regular meals. Aurobindo s brother at one time took a part time job out of sheer necessity

It has already been observed that Aurobindo wrote verses and poetry from his early childhood. This tendency was not restricted to writing only in English but included Latin and Greek. He continued to be a stranger to Indian languages literature and imagery until his return to India. It is therefore natural that we find in his early poems, classical names from Greek and Roman mythology and the use of classical imagery These poems were published after he had settled down in Baroda. They reveal not only an uncanny poetic skill and mastery of the English language, phrase, and imagery but also a developing skill in the technique of poetry Though his muse began her career as a tiny rivulet, she later developed and expanded until Aurobindo was inspired to write the grand and imposing epic of "Savitri This great epic of his inner life which he began writing in Baroda and ended only on the eve of his passing away is rich and replete not merely with English imagery of the earlier days but also with the resplendent and pregnant phrase so characteristic of Indian imagination and of Sanskrit imagery Seldom has the Eng-

fully imbibed and developed a deep love of the English language and its poetry. But his stay did not succeed in creating any love of England or of England's political ways. On the other hand, he had great admiration of the Irish struggle for freedom, and its hero Parnell. When the latter died in 1891 he wrote a eulogy on him. Of all European countries, he had greater attachment to France, though he had neither occasion to visit nor to live in it. It was his admiration of the French Revolution and the Irish patriots, together with his passion for Indian freedom which urged him to join the "Lotus and Dagger" association, an indication of the line he would follow on his return to India.

Once he had successfully contrived to disqualify himself from the I.C.S. Aurobindo must have been secretly happy that he was not now to take part in the "British steel frame" in India. After completing his studies at the University he instinctively thought of returning to India, a thought that attracted him like a magnet in the innermost recesses of his heart. He was drawn to India by natural attraction to Indian culture and ways of life and by a temperamental feeling and preference for all that was Indian. The call of Saraswati from her "lotus-heaven" the call of "the regions of eternal snow" the call of the Ganges was there and he soon made preparations for going home. The next thirteen years of his life, from 1893 to 1906, which may be said to be the years of his preliminary Sadhana for his future spiritual-political life were bound principally to an academic career in Baroda State.

It was most unfortunate that his father did not live to see his successful son return home. Almost on the eve of his return, Dr. Krishnadhan wrote to his brother-in-law Jogendra Bose in very glowing terms about Aurobindo. He was proud of his sons and specially of "Auro" as he was fondly called. But by some tragic mistake his bankers, Grindlay & Sons wrongly informed Dr. Ghose that his son had already sailed and that the ship had

established there in 1891 and often took part in the debates. Keshav Ganesh Deshpande, Hari Singh Gour Beachcroft, Francis Xavier, De Souza and Pereira were some of his colleagues at Cambridge. In his speeches he dealt with the British imperialistic hold on India, sometimes in no mild or measured terms. Some of his statements could easily be characterized as revolutionary It is said that these speeches earned for him a black mark by the India Office and were responsible in no small measure for his not being encouraged to enter the Indian Civil Service. Aurobindo and his brothers almost instinctively found themselves among a group of fiery young men in England who openly avowed their dislike and dissatisfaction of the liberal and moderate views of leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji. These ardent youths did not stop merely at expressing their resentment in words. During the last days of their stay some who thought in extremist terms, which meant action, met in London and formed a secret group known as the "Lotus and Dagger ! This was the first attempt of its kind by Indians in England Aurobindo joined it. Each one of the members took a pledge to adopt some measure which would help towards ending foreign rule in India. The Group however did not become operative, though some of its members notably Aurobindo, kept their vow and acted upon it later in life

Though almost from his infancy Aurobindo had been weaned from Indian languages and culture and though very strong denationalising forces played upon him throughout his student days in India and in England the healthy and vigorous seeds of patriotism, sown and nourished by his father s letters from India, steadily grew in his mind It was this growing patriotism which made him increasingly intolerant of the moderate school of Indian politicians. Thus was laid the foundation for an aggressive nationalism which created an intense hunger for immediate and extreme action against the standing insult of foreign rule.

During his fourteen years stay in England, Sri Aurobindo

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sunk off Lisbon. The poor old man died of heart failure with the name of Aurobindo on his lips In actual fact, Aurobindo sailed by the S S "Carthage' a vessel that left London later and arrived safely in Bombay in February 1893

The late Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwar of Baroda was well-known for choosing his employees with great care and discretion. This was, in fact, the secret of the progress of his State. When the Maharajah first came to know through Mr James Cotton brother of Sir Henry Cotton, that a talented and ardent young man named Aurobindo was willing to enter his service, he immediately accepted the idea The matter was settled after an interview with the Maharajah, who was then in England Thus the young Aurobindo joined the Baroda State Service and sailed for India.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT PREPARATION

Now began another epoch in the life and development of Sri Aurobindo After his return to India in 1893 he first went to see his mother Swarnlata in Rohini a village four miles from Deoghar She was staying there with his younger brother Barindra. Unfortunately she had an attack of hysteria and did not immediately recognise Aurobindo. She said that Auro" had the mark of a cut on his hand It was only when that was revealed to her that she began to show some sign of recognition She was called 'Pagli Ma Few dared to go near her as she would sometimes rush brandishing a dagger! Aurobindo sent money to her and also to his sister Sarojini for her education at Bankipore. Barindra after bad experience in running a tea shop, on a paltry sum of Rs. 900 in Patna suddenly joined him in 1901 in Baroda, and from that time attached himself to his elder brother and accepted his guidance in all matters. Barindra occasionally

returned to stay with his mother He had another small house close to Raldih level-crossing on the East Indian Railway main line for carrying out bomb experiments and for an arms dump. Bombs were tested in the Digharra hills for revolutionary purposes.

While Barindra was staying in Baroda he fell a prey in 1904 to malignant fever He went out into some deep forest in the Baroda State, to find a suitable place for founding a "Bhavani Mandir" to train youths. He caught a dangerous fever there. It did not yield to any ordinary treatment. As if by accident a Naga Sannyasi who came to Aurobindo cured Barindra by giving him a cup of water to drink which he crossed by a knife charged with some Mantra. This made a deep impression on Aurobindo. He gave to Aurobindo also some Mantra and performed a Yajna. But this was all for political power and victory and not for Yoga or spiritual Sadhana.

Sri Aurobindo had completed all his academic studies while in England, and after returning to India, settled down in Baroda in 1893 But it was neither a real end to his studies nor a final settling down in a permanent and secure job. In fact, along with other preoccupations, this was a starting point for new studies regarding everything Indian and Eastern. The study of Indian languages, history and culture attracted him first. He was absorbed in them all the time he was in Baroda. His life there was one great preparation first for a surprisingly brief yet extraordinarily brilliant patriotic career and subsequently for his Yoga in Pondicherry It should be noted, however that his patriotism was not of the usual type but was grounded in spirituality and his career during 1906-1910 must be characterized more as spiritio-political rather than merely political in the ordinary sense The thirteen years, from 1893 before he actually took to active and open politics, may be said to have been utilized intensely for laying the foundations of his overall integral spiritual outlook of life, of the burning patriotism which was impatient of foreign domination in any shape or form, of the ex-

treme but firm political policies he was to adopt, and of the deep-rooted love of his people and their culture.

So far Aurobindo's life had been almost untouched by Indian or Oriental influences. The English language and Western civilization had a "tabula rasa" to work upon all the time. And that was his father's ambition which, one can say had been completely fulfilled. Except for the fragmentary knowledge of Bengali he had acquired for the Indian Civil Service examination in England Aurobindo did not know any Indian language, much less anything of Indian life and culture. And who was his teacher in Bengali? One, Mr Robert Mason Towers, who was called Pandit. He was so great a Pandit in Bengali that he understood only the Bengali used by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in "Bodhodaya". When confronted with the Bengali of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee he exclaimed that is not Bengali! Aurobindo's education in England however had given him a very good grounding in western thought, western life and western civilization. He was as familiar with everything western as any accomplished European intellectual of his time. This very familiarity, however, revealed to his great penetrating insight the defects from which both western and Indian Civilizations were suffering. While he highly valued and praised the scientific method and approach, the power of organisation the importance of discipline the massive and intricate structure of the civilization of the West, he was deeply conscious of the want of the informing spirit, of the soul, of the higher approach that he felt necessary if humanity was to take the next leap in evolution. He was always sympathetic, accommodative and comprehensive in his outlook and therefore he never rejected or repudiated anything western. His settling for the time being in Baroda with this background gave him the required opportunity to study the East and specially India. It was this study which facilitated the presentation by him later of a synthetic view which alone can enable people to value both the East and the West in the right perspective.

Baroda was the pretty capital of a small Indian State in Gujarat which could boast of a very progressive Prince in the person of the Maharajah, Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwar. Usually the princes were but puppets, and in all States the cramping and crushing suzerainty of the British raj made itself felt through the Resident a high officer of the Crown. In spite of this damping atmosphere however there were some princes, though few and far between, who loved their subjects and tried to do some good to them. The Maharajah of Baroda was certainly one of such enlightened and bold princes. He was himself well-educated and widely travelled. He believed in good administration as well as in educating his subjects. He initiated a number of reforms, advanced the cause of education, started a library movement, established a technical institution, and worked for the advance of women and the backward classes. He knew the value of good and efficient men. He appreciated the importance of foreign education and was always careful in choosing his chief ministers. It was this progressive outlook that made him decide to take Aurobindo into the Baroda State Service. Aurobindo found his new surroundings quite congenial for his studies and he engaged himself in the task of building up a vast store of knowledge. The accumulation of knowledge (Jnan-sanchaya) seemed then to be the sole aim of his life, says Dinendra Kumar Roy in his Bengali book, "*Aurobindo Prasanga*"

So far as Aurobindo's official career in the Baroda State Service is concerned, he began on a salary of Rs. 200/- per month and worked as a probationer in the Revenue Settlement Department, and then for some time in the Stamps and Revenue Department. He went through the Secretariat work also and spent some time in writing despatches and reports. But he gradually gravitated towards educational work and teaching where, undoubtedly he felt more at home. He began first as a lecturer in French at the college but was soon appointed Professor of English. When he left for Calcutta in 1906 he was the Vice-Princi-

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pal of Baroda College. His salary was then Rs. 750/- per month. The Maharajah's great regard and admiration of Aurbindo was evident from the fact that he was often informally entrusted with drafting very important confidential State communications. He was sometimes looked upon as a prospective Diwan. But his retiring temperament, his somewhat shy and reserved nature and the want of certain other special qualifications necessary for an obedient and successful courtier, came in the way of his advance along that line. But he never pined after that way of life. He even avoided State dinners attending them only when he had the prospect of getting through some particular business. After a time, the Maharajah recognized the limitations of his exceptionally brilliant intelligent, and efficient officer and allowed him to have his own way and to pursue his academic bent undisturbed Aurobindo was very popular with his students and colleagues. Until he left for a wider field and for a more turbulent and stormy atmosphere he enjoyed their warmth of feeling and tenderness of affection.

While he was pursuing in a normal manner the official career described above he was also intently following the innate bent of his inner nature his Swabhava, his Swadharma. It can be described as a relentless search after the very Soul of things. He was never satisfied with appearances with names and forms, with manifestations. He would always try to get to the root of the matter in everything He had a clear and definite picture of the very source and tap-root of western civilization and all that it stood for Now he wanted to delve deeply into the vast expanse of Indian life and its ancient but continuous culture and discover for himself the eternal inspiration that kept it ever alive and afresh. He felt proud that India could boast of a great cultural heritage but deplored sorely the shameful political depression to which she was subjected. Now that he was in India, he began to explore the deeper causes of India's weakness which had dragged her into the mire. He was conscious of the appal

ling poverty of India's miserable millions and was anxious to find out the economic and other causes that lay at the root. He realized that the dust of ages had settled down on numerous social and other evils in Indian life and he wanted to know where to apply the lever But above all, his search was for the Self of all selves, for the One and Indivisible Reality which pervaded and informed everything This search superseded all others and sometimes it seemed that he had abandoned other pursuits. But it was never so. His was an encircling and multi-prolonged attack and he knew that whatever his pursuit, it would lead him to the central Truth, provided it was sincere, intense, and determined. Once that Truth was known, all else was known (Yasmin Vijnate Sarvamidam Vijnatam Bhavati). Thus the stream of his life flowed in a double current, one which was obvious, visible to the eye and which assumed the shape and form of an official career and varied literary and other activities. The other *current was inner deeper and stronger It moved fast to its* goal certainly and surely unseen and unknown to others, but in fact, carrying the real Aurobindo on its bosom all the time, unmistakably to the status of a Yogeshwar (the lord of Yoga)

This great quest should not be mistaken for mere intellectual hunger to know the why and wherefore of things. He sought the Truth with his whole being, with whatever he was worth. It was not the search of the philosopher for a mere rational theory of the universe. It was rather the hunger of the mystic for his "Beloved" the search of the Nara (son of man) for the Narayana. Nor was it solely for individual salvation and Nirvana but, as was later unfolded, it was for a general spiritual advance of humanity for the next step in evolution, the divinisation of human life.

It is in this perspective that we have to view his great preparation. It is true that in addition to official duties, the first thirteen years of his life after his return to India, were full of a number of other activities. But the running, powerful under

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weekly "*Dharma*" in which most of the articles were written by himself But at the same time it must be said that his command over English always far surpassed that over Bengali. And he never thought of addressing a public meeting in Bengali !

The next language to be mastered was Sanskrit. Obviously knowledge of this great and ancient language was very important from the point of view of having access to the *original source of* Indian thought, philosophy and culture. His study of Sanskrit was deep and continual. The impression made on him by the treasures available in the oldest and richest of languages was abiding. The Upanishads and the Gita served both as texts and as guides to him in spiritual matters. When he wrote on subjects concerning Indian thought and basic concepts, expressions, quotations, single important words of Sanskrit leapt to the tip of his pen almost without his realising it. He was conscious of the fact that the rich connotation of certain words in Sanskrit, such as Kritu, Ritam, Swabhava, Swadharma, etc., cannot be conveyed by English words in translation. He made it a point to clarify such pregnant expressions with elaborate explanations. His acquaintance with Sanskrit was not restricted to religious or philosophical texts. He became equally familiar with Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* as with the Vedas the Upanishads, the *Gita*, and of the *Manusmriti*. His appreciation and defence of Indian cultural thought in its various manifestations was neither secondhand nor by proxy. It sprang from his direct knowledge of what the great Rishis and Munis and Sahitis had written from inspiration and from *intuitive experience*. His highly original interpretation of many of the Riks, the *Ishavasya* and the *Gita* not only speaks for his deep scholarship but also for his ability to penetrate to the core of past thought and his capacity to recapture its spirit in vivid and incisive English phraseology.

Two other Indian languages with which he had to acquaint himself were Marathi and Gujerati, both of which were officially recognized by the State of Baroda. The State territory lay wholly

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current was spiritual Sadhana. Even his politics and patriotism were but forms of Sadhana. It required some time before this emphasis became quite pronounced but long before he took to actual politics, the spiritual motive had established its dominance in his mind and his patriotism as well as politics were permeated with a highly spiritual outlook. To omit spirituality from Aurobindo's thought and life would be to miss the very essence of his being.

Let us now resume the survey of his pursuits and activities in Baroda. His life there consisted of State service, intense study, political activity of a secret character Sadhana which later became very pronounced and family life In the beginning, he devoted much of his time to the study of Indian languages including Sanskrit He showed great aptitude for mastering them. He started with Bengali with which he was only slightly acquainted. Mostly he taught himself though in 1898 Dinendra K. Roy was invited to assist him as a companion, especially in the matter of conversation, correct pronunciation, current idiom, and literature. It is obvious that two Bengali writers who impressed him very much were Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the pioneer in modern Bengali poetry, and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee the great Bengali novelist and prose writer A tribute paid to Dutt includes the couplet

"Poet who first with skill inspired did teach
Greatness to our divine Bengali speech

He was equally charmed with the writings of Bankim, the master of prose —

He sowed the desert with ruddy hearted rose
The sweetest voice that ever spoke in prose.

He also wrote as early as 1894 in the '*Indu Prakash*' an Anglo-Marathi Journal of Bombay articles on Bankim's work. This Journal advocated the views of the Moderate Party With one year's assistance from Dinendra Kumar, he mastered the Bengali language in 1898-99 Later in 1909, he conducted a Bengali

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in the Gujarati-speaking area but the ruling dynasty was Marathi-speaking; hence the almost equal status of both languages in the State It is not fully evident from any of his writings that Aurobindo studied either language very deeply or extensively His reference to writers in those languages is very casual

His study of other European languages, Greek and French for instance had not abated His library was full of books in more than half a dozen European languages. Greek and German philosophy continued to be studied as well as Indian. In fact, there was no subject in which he was not interested or about which he did not read and think. Two book shops in Bombay had standing orders to acquaint him promptly of any new titles. He read Homer, Dante, and Horace as avidly as he studied the English and Sanskrit poets. With all his foreign studies, it is surprising that Aurobindo was influenced by them the least in fundamentals.

While he continued his extensive studies he also devoted some time to writing and to publication. Some of the poems written while he was in England were now published for the first time "*Songs to Myrtilla* was his first publication. He also wrote a number of poems on Indian themes. Gradually the classical Greek and Latin flavour that had once suffused his literary productions evaporated. His writings now drew inspiration from the Sanskrit classics. The rich tropical atmosphere of India lent to him the exhuberant imagery with which Sanskrit and other Indian literature is so full.

His writings and publications, however were not restricted to books alone. Far more important were the articles he contributed (August 1893 to February 1894) to the "*Indu Prakash*" of Bombay under the title "*New Lamps for Old*" They reflected very vividly his political opinions. He laid great emphasis on self-help, on sincerity on building up inner strength and on character He condemned the moderate leadership then obtaining and wrote that it was as if the blind led the blind. It was no wonder that a mind fully alive to the iniquity of India's slavery a

mind stimulated to think seriously of the wrongs of British rule, a mind that had become impatient of the moderate school of politics and a mind that had been driven to take a vow to end British rule, now preached extreme patriotism in pungent and cutting phrase with all the rhetoric that a young scholar could command. His being in service however prevented him from openly acknowledging his writings and, consequently the publication of the articles, was anonymous. He wrote them at the request of a close friend and Cambridge classmate, Keshavrao G. Deshpande, who was then in charge of the "*Indu Prakash*"

These first articles of a fiery patriot, created quite a stir and it is said that M. G. Ranade advised the proprietor of the "*Indu Prakash*" to discontinue them lest the government should pounce upon the journal and ban its publication. A hint from the proprietor was conveyed through the editor of the journal, and Aurobindo had to discontinue the series ! Another set of articles written by him in 1894 on Bankim, Tilak, and Dayanand reflected his thoughts on these three great personages who each in his own way had contributed to the re-awakening of slumbering India. Bankim C. Chatterjee gave to Bengal a polished prose style and taught the people to look upon India as their Mother. The immortal song "*Bande Mataram*" which forms part of his famous Bengali novel "*Ananda Math*" became at first in the Swadeshi days,the symbol and clarion call of nationalism. It spread throughout India and was on the lips of all as the national song. Today it shares with Rabindra Nath Tagore's "*Jana-Gana Mana*" the honour of being also India's National Anthem.

If his study of Indian languages and the publication of literary productions give us a picture of his progress in the field of literature and of culture, Aurobindo's contributions to the "*Indu Prakash*" acquaint us fairly well with his patriotic and political ideas. He was in those days a voracious reader. It is said that he not only had books posted to him, but more often than not, they were forwarded in crate-loads. He sat at an ordinary ke-

rosene lamp reading deep into the night and rose late After morning tea, he would again read and write till ten o clock and then take his bath. He would often continue to read papers during meals and afterwards, when smoking a cigar

To speak of his patriotism first, he had already developed a strongly pro-Indian bias. In Baroda, he was more often seen in simple Indian dress. His love of things Indian was genuine and deepened with the passage of time and with the progress of his Indian studies. But his patriotism was not based merely on economic and political motives. He would not have been satisfied for instance, if India had become only politically free and economically rich. His patriotism never descended even by mistake to the aggressive type of expansive nationalism that hankers after conquest in the name of culture or hungers after the lands of others in the name of "living space It never lost the perspective of an international setting and of a world organized as a single unit through peace goodwill, and cooperation for the progress of humanity His love of India ultimately led him to "*The Ideal of Human Unity*" which clearly shows the broader hidden basis of his nascent love of his own land and people. His patriotism was apiece with the Indian renaissance that was struggling hard to find its ancient soul and express it in new terms and with vigour as was required by the modern age Another important feature was that his patriotism was almost religious in essence and highly spiritual in content To him India was not merely a geographical expression or a political and economic entity It was not only a rich and resplendent land of great rivers and mighty mountains and an ancient people with an imposing culture India was to him a Mother to be revered and a Goddess to be worshipped Contemplation of her and her service gave him the same thrill and the same deep experience that one enjoys while in deep meditation. India was to him the very embodiment of a great spiritual message the fountain head of the wisdom of the spirit the home of rich and invalu

able inner experiences.

A number of patriotic spirits had expressed their love of India in different ways since the middle of the nineteenth century. Many of them had had no occasion to come into direct conflict with the British, but their love of India and the Indian people was not less genuine. Along with social and religious reform, they had a strong desire for India's freedom and expressed the same in terms which were far from ambiguous when occasion arose. Of Raja Ram Mohan Roy the earliest of the giants, it was said, "He would be free or not be at all. Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul" (William Adam, Baptist missionary). If patriotism means love of India, of Indian people, of Indian way of life, together with a strong desire for the political freedom of India, then Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda Saraswati were certainly great patriots. They valued the freedom of India as much as those who actually fought in the political field, although their main tasks lay in fields other than those of politics. All shared the pleasant duty of evoking love of India in the hearts of the young and old of their own generation. It is no wonder that Aurobindo was impressed so much by these patriots who had shown such genuine love of India and rendered selfless service in one field or another. His great admiration of Bankim Chatterjee for instance, is expressed in very high terms. To him he was not only a prophet of Indian cultural renaissance, but "a seer and a nation-builder" and one of the makers of modern India.

Aurobindo's utterances in the Indian Majlis debates at Cambridge while still in his adolescence, his joining the "Lotus and Dagger" group in London and his writings in the *Indu Prakash* reveal to us unmistakably his political ideas and ideals. Love of one's country has to take some concrete form before it can become politically effective. It is obvious that his mind was definitely heading towards the ideal of Swaraj or full independence. He defined it later in 1909 in one of his speeches. He said, "Our

ideal of Swaraj involves no hatred of any other nation or of the administration which is now established by law in this country We find a bureaucratic administration, we wish to make it democratic; we find an alien government, we wish to make it indigenous we find a foreign control, we wish to render it Indian. They lie who say that this aspiration necessitates hatred and violence. Our ideal of patriotism proceeds on the basis of love and brotherhood and it looks beyond the unity of the nation and envisages the ultimate unity of mankind But it is a unity of brothers and free men that we seek, not the unity of master and serf, of the devourer and devoured The first item on Aurobindo s programme was freedom, unadulterated freedom He was therefore, quite averse to all other lesser and procrastinating political policies. It is true that political extremism which ultimately emerged during the Swadeshi movement in 1906 in the form of a demand for immediate Swaraj had not yet taken birth, except in the form of impatient and strong utterances and writings of *ardent spirits like B.G Tilak There was an intense desire for* freedom but no organised policy or concrete programme had yet taken shape in the minds of patriots. They had definite sympathies with those who were engaged in a programme to collect arms and train youth for the purpose of an ultimate armed revolution. It was looked upon as complementary but it was a very long range programme of something like thirty years. Attempts at organization were, moreover on a very small scale. In the absence of an active political programme it was natural that persons of the persuasion of Aurobindo should bide their time. He tried to express his views through the columns of a newspaper but, as we know he found the editor unwilling to take risks so he returned to his shell His writing on Tilak reveals how his mind was running and how he admired the robust nationalism of the young Maratha patriot *who was the first in India to suffer for* writing seditious articles.

Before going to the development of Aurobindo s spirituality

and his practice of Yoga, we should first note the contacts he had in Baroda, his marriage to Mrinalini, and the kind of social life he led.

Apart from official circles in which Aurobindo had to move, there were few persons with whom he was closely associated during this period.

One was Keshav Ganesh Deshpande, who had been a classmate at Cambridge, and was then editor of the "*Indu Prakash*" of Bombay. And his most intimate friend was Lieutenant Madhavrao Jadhav who helped him in everything even after his departure to Calcutta for political work. Aurobindo lived with Madhavrao in Baroda for years. During his thirteen years of stay he lived sometimes in one and sometimes in another of four or five houses. Some other friends were Khaserao Jadhav, Phadke and Mangesh Kolatkar. His life was always simple to the point of being uncomfortable. He used an iron cot and even in winter went without quilts. He was indifferent to his surroundings, as is evident from the houses he chose to live in, the type of servants that were engaged, and the way he suffered equally heat and cold without concern. His taste for food was quite simple. Gujerathi food was too fat and Maratha food too hot for him. He liked Tilak's spartan meals, as he called them. He ate meat or fish only once a day and preferred bread to rice.

Socially speaking, the most important thing that happened to Aurobindo while in Baroda was his marriage in April 1901 to Mrinalini Devi, a young and beautiful girl, who was destined to suffer for marrying a genius. She was the daughter of Bhopal Chandra Bose of Jessore who had settled in Ranchi. She had rarely the opportunity of living with her husband for long, though their relations were most cordial and full of affection from the beginning to the end. Aurobindo, who was later highly conscious of his great destiny wrote to her often in detail and tried to prepare her mind for a life other than that of a mere housewife. She was a high-souled woman of great devotion and piety and by her

dignity made suffering itself a step towards a higher life. He welcomed her to live with him from time to time, but after leaving Baroda his life was so full of activity that his wife and sister Sarojini lived together for days and months at a time and once for a full year while Aurobindo was in Alipore jail After his departure to Pondicherry in 1910 there was no question of his visiting her as he then plunged into even deeper Yoga which called for utter seclusion and austere continence. He gave permission however for his wife to come to Pondicherry in 1918 but while she was making the journey she fell ill in Calcutta and died after a severe attack of influenza. Her brother Dr Sisir Kumar now (1954) a medical practitioner in Ranchi, testifies to the fact that she always bore the separation well and with satisfaction as she realized that although she was high in the estimation of her husband, she would *not be helping him in his way of life by insisting* on his company as any devoted wife would normally have done.

Regarding Aurobindo's marriage one or two things are worth noting He had many other offers before marrying Mrinalini. The question of Prayaschitta (expiation) also came up. Like his father, he too refused *it since he saw no sin in having gone* and lived in England. Ultimately however a clever priest absolved him on payment of some Daxina ! But generally Aurobindo adopted a very reverent attitude towards other rituals in the ceremony He took them quite seriously Distinguished visitors such as Sir and Lady, Jagadish *Bose and Lord Sinha* were present. Soon after his marriage Aurobindo went (28th May 1901) with his wife and sister to Naini Tal for a few days. It can be said that what little family life Aurobindo lived began with his marriage in 1901 and ended in 1910 with his departure for Chandernagore and then *for Pondicherry Short as was the* period it was never continuous or steady and was full of long breaks.

After marriage, Aurobindo ran a house spasmodically but his wife often stayed at Deoghar At time he even failed to send

money for her expenses. He was never careful about his own expenditure though it cannot be said that he spent money for extravagant purposes. Dinendra K. Roy who was with him for a year in 1898-99 says that he lived alone and knew no luxury but not a pie was left at the end of the month. He is not an earthly being, writes Dinendra, he is "a strayed god" He described him as one with a slightly pock-marked face, long hair and dreamy eyes. Instead of fashionable wear he wore a simple "mirjai" (kurta) of Indian mill-cloth He adds that Aurobindo had practically no desires, shunned all limelight talked little was self-controlled and had made study his life's ambition.

Viewed from a historical standpoint, what was most significant and important in the life of Aurobindo in Baroda was his grounding in spirituality and initiation into Yoga. I shall not go into detail here of his Sadhana as that will be done when writing later of his spiritual life. Here I shall only touch the subject to the extent required for telling the story of his activities in Baroda

When one glances at the books and general literature he read in early days and at his poetry and other literary activities, one is inclined to think that it was the Muses he loved best and that it was aesthetics and the Goddess of Beauty that lured him most. Ramesh Chandra Dutt, who met Aurobindo in 1899 and saw his translations of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* testified to the high quality of the effort and said he would never have made the attempt himself if he had known that Aurobindo was already doing it At the beginning of his career Aurobindo had not shown much inclination for either philosophy or metaphysics. Both subjects appeared to him to be dry and intellectual. He hankered after the flesh of living and stirring ideas. Mere skeletons and theories did not thrill him with emotion. He knew as much of philosophy as a good literary man should, but did not at that time pursue it as a subject. His acquaintance with the work of philosophers western as well as eastern, was meagre in

those days.

The writings of Swami Vivekananda made a strong impression upon Sri Aurobindo although the influence of Paramahansa was far more profound and abiding It can be said with some truth that it was from these two great souls that he received his first glimpse of spirituality and of the great message of India. Vivekananda, after his return to India from the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, addressed a Madras audience on the role of India. He said "Spirituality must conquer the world Slowly they (westerners) are finding out that what they want is spirituality to preserve them as nations The whole of the western world is perched on a volcano which may burst and go to pieces tomorrow They have searched every corner of the world and found no respite. They have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure and have found it to be mere vanity Now is the time to work, so that India's spiritual ideas may penetrate deep into the West.' This reveals not only a faith in spirituality in the truth of the Spirit in the truth of a Being of the nature of eternal Existence-Consciousness-Bliss but also a faith that India is a country highly competent to spread the message of spirituality To abandon this role would mean for India the casting away of "Swadharma one's own inner law of being Intellect erudition and scholarship, had never by themselves charmed Aurobindo but in the person of Shri Ramakrishna he found solid gold naked spirituality shorn of all intellectual embellishment Aurobindo said of the sage of Dakshineshwar "Shri Ramakrishna himself but lived what many would call the life of a mad man, a man without intellectual training a man without any outward sign of culture or civilization, a man who lived on the alms of others such a man as the English-educated Indian would ordinarily talk of as one useless to society, though not a bane to society He will say "This man is ignorant What does he know ? What can he teach me who has received from the West all that it can teach !" But God knew He sent that man to Bengal and set

him in the temple of Dakshineshwar in Calcutta, and from North and South, and East and West, the educated men, men who were the pride of the university who had studied all that Europe could teach them, came to fall at the feet of this ascetic. The work of salvation, the work of raising India was begun."

It is plain as daylight that Aurobindo was attracted more by spirituality than by anything else. At the same time, he knew that spirituality was not something to be attained by mere intellect (Na Medhaya, Na Bahuna Shrutena) He also knew that the Atman could not be attained by the weak and the cowardly (Na Balaheenena Labhyah) There was the great road to spirituality shown by the ancient Rishis, the Yoga-vidhi referred to in the *Katha Upanishad*. It has been described as a path which is "sharp like a razor s edge" and "very difficult to tread' But his innate nature inevitably and unmistakenly was leading him to the spiritual path which he was later to illumine by a brilliant flame lit by arduous and daring Sadhana, all his own.

Aurobindo had had some spiritual experiences before he settled down in Baroda, but had not given much thought or importance to them. That was before he started his Yoga practices. It is said that K. G Deshpande once urged him to take to Yoga. But at that time he had not the inner call. Gradually however it became urgent for him to follow the path of Yoga the call developed into an insistent demand. Nothing short of the acme of spiritual experience, which the ancients have so eloquently described could be his ideal. It is usual for aspirants to try to find a Guru who would fully initiate the disciple into the mysterious path. But Aurobindo could not find a Guru to suit him. He was fortunate, however in obtaining inspiration from several worth people Shri Sadguru Brahmananda at Chandod on the Narmada is mentioned as one of the great saintly men who blessed him and gave Darshan. Although it was said Brahmananda never looked into the eyes of those who went to see him, in the case of Aurobindo, he not only did so but also showered good

wishes on the would be Yogi Aurobindo later referred to his eyes as being very beautiful But it must be mentioned that they had no talk with each other It is believed that one of the disciples of Brahmananda gave Aurobindo his first lessons in Pranayam. It is said that he visited Chandod two or three times. Though we cannot say that these contacts were decisive it is quite obvious that they all tended to guide Aurobindo along the path which was now quite clear before him His Yogic Sadhana started with contemplation and Pranayam in 1904 and he spent hours in practice. It seems that later from 1907 contact with Yogi Shri Vishnu Bhaskar Lele of Gwalior helped Aurobindo quite positively On two occasions he called on him for help and each time the directions received were relevant and extremely useful. Aurobindo s Sadhana was without doubt mostly self-directed. By the time that he left Baroda for Calcutta he had already advanced a great deal This advance in Yoga gave him deeper insight, greater strength, firmer faith and more confidence in himself.

This chapter on preparation would not be complete without some mention of the steps Aurobindo took towards organising several revolutionary groups. It was part of his political work and as was usual with him done quite noiselessly and inconspicuously It should be noted that Aurobindo never directly took part in arms-training, the making of bombs collection of ammunition or military studies. He did the work of inspiring and of strengthening the moral fibre of those who wanted to join the groups. After 1901 when Barindra his younger brother joined him in Baroda, he began to take great interest in this form of activity But nothing of importance was accomplished till 1902 when some attempt at organisation was made

The seed of the whole movement may be traced to the "Lotus and Dagger group of London That body in itself was no doubt practically still born, but Aurobindo was one of those who took seriously the secret oath to set India free The idea of secret revolutionary societies was not new in Europe. There were a

number of them in Ireland, and the Carbonari of Italy were quite famous. The idea found favour with the youth of India and from the outset groups began to be organised in Bengal and Maharashtra, more than any other province. The general plan was to organise throughout the land small handy groups of ardent youths pledged to secrecy and sacrifice, for their country They were to be trained to live a hardy life to the use of arms, and to movements of a military nature. When sufficient men had been organised throughout the land, at a given signal there was to be an armed revolution and a coup It was calculated that it would take about thirty years to become fully organised. Leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and other extremists were in touch with some of these groups and although they never discouraged them, they were themselves never organisers nor in the centre of things. They looked upon this activity as something complementary and possibly useful. Though unfortunately some of the members of these groups degenerated into terrorists, the main idea and inspiration was an open armed rebellion, perhaps with the help of the Indian Army which was sought to be tampered with.

It is neither possible nor necessary to give here the full details of Aurobindo's activities in this field. Especially because once Barindra became active and entered into the arena of revolutionary politics, Aurobindo's direct connection with the groups practically ceased. In fact, he had made it quite clear to Barindra Kumar Ghose and Upendra Bannerjee that he would have no direct connection with them and that they should manage the whole thing themselves. But until he actually left Bengal Aurobindo had full knowledge of what was going on to the extent that he knew that Khudiram Bose and his associate had left for Muzaffarpur with bombs! He continued to inspire the youths who thought in terms of revolution. It is sufficient if we indicate the type of work he did and the way he did it. By making arrangements to have Jatin Banerji, a young and ardent Bengali,

trained in the Baroda cavalry, he may be said to have made a concrete beginning This was in spite of the British Government ban on enlistment of Bengalis in the army and many years after his arrival in Baroda. Jatin was then asked to go to Bengal to survey the field from the point of view of persuading suitable young men to start centres Aurobindo visited some of the districts of Bengal during his vacations and contacted several potential recruits During 1904 and later he visited Khulna, Midnapur Dacca Rangpur and other places. Taking the oath was a great ceremony Sometimes it was with the Gita in one hand and a sword in the other Aurobindo was in touch with some of the Maharashtra revolutionaries, among whom Haribhau Modak, Kaka Patil and some others met him at Thana near Bombay in September 1904 *It is strange that even persons like Rishi Raj Narayan Bose were caught in the vortex of this movement.* The young Rabindranath Tagore also took the oath. Sometimes magistrates and I C. S officers of the calibre of Jogen Mukherji and Charuchandra Dutt of Thana would lend a helping hand to the cause. In 1902, Sister Nivedita visited Baroda for the express purpose of meeting Aurobindo in this connection and through him to enlist the sympathies of the Maharajah! "I hear you are a worshipper of Shakti–force was the way she addressed him. He had read her booklet on "*Kali the Mother* Madhav Rao Jadhav, a nephew of Khase Rao Jadhav of Baroda was sent to England to receive training in arms and military education which included the manufacture of bombs and revolvers. Aurobindo gave some financial help to the venture. There was also some idea of establishing a "Bhavani Mandir (mentioned in the Rowlatt Report), a place in some mountain retreat where youth could be trained in spirituality and revolution. Perhaps Bankim's '*Ananda Math*' was the parent of this idea. Aurobindo was the author of the pamphlet "*Bhavani Mandir*" The book explained the purpose of founding a centre where a powerful blend of spirituality and patriotism could be inculcated among the inmates.

Hemendra Das, Mandavale, Mitter Jatin, Barindra, and Thakur Ramsingh, who was looked upon as a keyman, were some of the important persons connected with this movement. With them Aurobindo had contacts. Active work in this matter was begun only in 1902. As I have said however this was but a small chapter in Aurobindo's life and when he later plunged into the wider stormy sea of political life, he ceased to take active part in these happenings in the backwaters, though he maintained contacts with them as long as he was in Bengal.

To sum up, these thirteen years of great preparation, with hardly any diversion, laid the foundation of everything in Aurobindo's life which afterwards was to manifest itself abundantly and blaze forth with resplendence. It was during these years that he became acquainted with the rich heritage of India and the East. Aurobindo continued to add to his knowledge of the West and of science by keeping in touch with the most recent books on the subjects. His literary output helped him to fix his ideas and form his own style. His political convictions became stronger and he felt confident that he could present his ideas incisively and with great effect. His patriotism found a deeper base in spirituality and his spirituality became a stern fact of his conscious life. No longer did it remain a mere aspiration or an empty longing. But since spirituality is not merely an intellectual affair but a matter of experience, he started on the journey to making it his own along the well-beaten path of Yoga. He had married but at the same time decided that he should lift himself and his consort out of the ordinary level of man and wife relationship, and live Platonically as companion spirits who aspire after perfect beatitude.

Thus at the age of thirty-four Aurobindo was ready to enter into the whirl of political life with equipment of an extraordinary kind. Apart from the usual qualifications and achievements, of which he had more than enough, here was a man, who believed that the finger of God was in everything who looked upon India

as the Divine Mother who had faith in India's spiritual mission, who knew both the East and the West inside out and who had already advanced to a great extent in Yogic Sadhana. From the ordinary view-point, these were not qualifications which fitted a man for politics. Possibly by some, they were looked upon as disqualifications. But India's politics of those days were not so much the usual power politics but politics of the fight for independence. What was required of a leader was the power to rouse the consciousness of the people to the abnormal Indian situation, to inspire them with confidence, to give them a programme of service and self sacrifice and to raise them from the abject position of crawling cripples, that they were, to the level of heroes. It is obvious that Aurobindo was eminently fitted for this task. During the few years that he strode across the political arena of India, he swept everything before him and became the idol of the younger generation which was eager for effective action

CHAPTER V

THE CALL TO ACTION

WHILE Aurobindo was going through a period of preparation for heroic action and active leadership of the political forces of his country, the country itself was also advancing from a state of dumb, sullen acquiescence to the stage of effective agitation, through open and bold expression. The National Congress was still plodding along its old way but there were now vocal elements in and outside the party which openly avowed that the old days were gone. The younger generation was impatient of foreign rule Men like Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab Lokamanya Tilak in Maharashtra, Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal were eagerly listened to when they made impassioned speeches which called for vigorous action. Aurobindo was already in touch with the revolutionaries—not terrorists—in Western India and had repeat

ed his vow to end British rule. From the beginning however it was Barindra, Aurobindo's younger brother who was more active in this work. It is now well-known that Aurobindo was not theoretically against violence if it was to be used for the righteous cause of the liberation of the country But after a full objective survey he realized that in the circumstances, open agitation, non-cooperation and passive resistance would be a more broadbased and effective remedy in the case of India.

The whole soul of the Indian nation was, no doubt, in a ferment,though beyond newspaper and platform agitation not much was visible on the surface. The gospel of revolution could not, in the very nature of things, make much headway as during preparation for it, some kind of camouflage had always to be adopted. There were a few Anusheelan Samitis and other Sabhas and groups which sheltered revolutionary planning but ostensibly taught physical training, lathi and sword-play Apart from these activities, however which were current all over the country by far the most widespread general awakening was in Bengal. A biography of Shivaji and "*Desher Katha*" both written in Bengali by one Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar a domiciled Marathi gentleman, created a great stir among the Bengali youth. The word "Swaraj" was first used by him to indicate complete independence Afterwards, it became a word universally used and understood in this sense. Brahmabandhava Upadhyaya, the editor of "*Sandhya*" a Bengali weekly did a great deal to foster this magic word. Dadabhai Naoroji used it later in the famous Congress resolution of 1906 to mean self-government. It required twenty-three years more however for Congress to use it in its resolution (1929) to mean "Complete Independence without British connection"

Once the Indian mind had been awakened by the new breath of the great renaissance and the thirst for independence had become intense strength was bound to be drawn from events occurring even outside India's border The most signi-

ficant of such events was the victory of the Japanese over the Russians in 1904-05 An oriental nation, which but very recently had begun to adopt western methods and scientific discoveries gave a crushing defeat to a big and mighty power like Russia This fact sent a thrill through the mind of every Indian and helped him to shed the inferiority complex which was then haunting all eastern nations. The religious zeal with which the gospel of nationalism *was preached by Mazzini*, the colourful heroism of Garibaldi, the skilful statesmanship of Count Cavour and the practical patriotism of Victor Emanuel lent special charm to the Italian scene Then the Irish struggle for freedom was *still on The dogged persistence with which it was waged* against odds coupled with the suffering and sacrifice of the Irish heroes, was very helpful in inspiring Indian youth in its struggle against England. The difference however, was obvious. While there was a continuing tradition of fight for independence in Ireland for centuries, in India love of the nation and for independence had to be re-cultivated

All vigorous elements in the country were seething with discontent though no organised channel had yet been found through which to release this fund of strong feeling It was reserved for the autocratic imperialist Lord Curzon, to provide the immediate cause for an outburst. It came in the form of the partition of Bengal on the 29th of September 1905 The proposal had been before the country for some time and as soon as it was known that the seal was set, there was one spontaneous uproar Bengal was soon a seething mass of agitation it being the most affected The 18th of October was observed as a day of mourning by the whole of Bengal. Many agitators began fasting Numerous meetings were held and resolutions of protest were passed But something more concrete was added Thousands of students left their schools and colleges as a protest and a "Use Swadeshi" vow was administered with loud acclaim at meetings Huge piles of foreign cloth were burnt to ashes. In Barisal, a protest pro-

cession headed by Ashwini Kumar Dutt was taken out. This was perhaps the first organised procession in deliberate defiance of a government order in India's struggle for freedom. Aurobindo was in the first row of it. It was dispersed by the police with the help of a lathi-charge. But the spirit of the people remained unbroken and challenging. The Rubicon had been crossed and there was no returning. The tide went on swelling everywhere and soon covered the whole of India. It was evident even to the government that the challenge had been accepted.

It happened at that time, that the Indian National Congress was the only all-India organization which could speak for the nation. But there the moderate element was still predominant. Outside, the forces of extremism were swelling and Congress had to recognize that fact at the Bombay session in 1904. Aurobindo attended that meeting although not as an active agitator. At the Benaras Congress in 1905, the elderly statesmen began to realize that the ranks of the extremists had swollen still further and that it would not be possible to postpone very much longer the sounding of the death knell of moderation in Indian politics. Partition had come as a shock even to the moderates and had helped to move them into action. But still they were unwilling to join hands with the extremists. Dadabhai Naoroji's shrewdness and venerable personality prevented the two forces from clashing openly in Calcutta in 1906. As President of the Session he persuaded the moderates to accept the fourfold programme proposed by the extremist, chief among whom were B.G. Tilak and Sri Aurobindo. This programme became famous immediately as "the Chatus-Sootri". The main items included a demand for self-government, spread of national education, the propagation of Swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods.

Though Aurobindo played a prominent yet silent part in forcing the issue on behalf of the extremists, his action may still be said to have been "incognito". Tilak directly collaborated with him and recognised him as the coming man of Bengal. And

yet, Aurobindo had still not taken the plunge and he continued to be a professor at Baroda. He was publicity-shy. But circumstances soon forced him to the fore and made him both *de jure* and *de facto* leader of an awakened Bengal and a militant India.

It may be useful on the eve of his direct and active entry into politics, to peep into the working of the mind of Aurobindo at this time. It is clear that there were two strong urges in him running parallel, one the spiritual and the other the political. But it is also clear that the political urge was subordinate to and took its inspiration from the spiritual. His love of the mother country, and his decision to liberate her from British domination were, as we know, as old as his school days in England. During his stay in Baroda this urge had strengthened still further and he had become "renationalized" with a firm grounding in Indian history and culture. His presence at the Congress in Ahmedabad in 1902 and later in Bombay as well as in Calcutta and his close association with Lokamanya Tilak set the seal on the kind of political career he would soon be entering. It was clear that his sympathies were with the revolutionaries and that he thought there was sufficient justification for their action, if matters remained as they were. So far as his own path was concerned, it lay along the fourfold programme prepared and passed at the Calcutta Congress.

It must be stressed however, that both Aurobindo's patriotism and politics were rooted in his spirituality. They did not mean anything to him unless they were connected and made part of his Sadhana ("his own work" as he called it) for the realization of the Supreme. The language of his politics and patriotism was always suffused with spirituality. He spoke and wrote more like a poet and a prophet and a visionary than as an ordinary politician. India's spiritual mission loomed far larger before his vision than mere political freedom, which he considered was bound to come in due course. His spiritual Sadhana continued with great intensity throughout his political career

and the time spent in suffering and solitude while in jail was converted into an opportunity for deeper communion with the Spirit. A letter written to his wife Mrinalini, in 1905 bears out all that has been said about his positive spiritual inclinations at this time. Even so, the next four years, constituted one of the briefest political careers in history and yet it was remarkably brilliant and most effective. Externally it was the most active period of his public life. It was also the most eventful and the most colourful one, compared with the other periods of his life.

Things were gradually shaping themselves in such a way that Aurobindo had to throw off his thin mask and come out into the open arena of turbulent politics. By the beginning of 1906, his attraction for Bengal had become positive. He was already writing in *Yugantar*" a revolutionary Bengali paper started by his younger but more fiery brother Barindra. Although his name did not appear anywhere, very few were ignorant of the fact that he was writing in it. Four or five editors went to jail on account of some of the articles. They did not defend themselves as they refused to recognise the British court as a court of justice! This was the first occasion on which this bold stand had been taken by a journal and severe consequences faced. Aurobindo took long leave from Baroda college at this time and organised the extreme nationalist element in Bengal. At the request of Bipin Chandra Pal, he associated himself with his English weekly "*Bande Mataram* and began to write for its columns, but again without revealing his name. Meanwhile the Maharaja of Baroda learnt that Aurobindo was not likely to return, and specially requested him not to leave Baroda and the college. But destiny had her own designs. Ultimately he took one year's leave and in August 1906 joined the staff of the Bengal National College as professor of English on the small salary of Rs. 150/-per month which was but one-fifth of his salary at Baroda! Thus the last link with Baroda was almost cut and the new one with Bengal and Calcutta forged. Henceforth, at

any rate for the next four years, his activities lay directly in the field of politics and in the struggle India was waging for her freedom.

In Calcutta, the main burden of knitting together the extremists and openly challenging the moderate school of thought fell upon Aurobindo. The Swadeshi agitation had given great fillip to the extremist party and the repressive policy of the government had strengthened nationalism. Very soon the "*Bande Mataram*" became a very popular daily. It leapt into prominence throughout India and its inspiring message entered every patriot's home. Practically all financial as well as the editorial burden of the journal shifted to the shoulders of Aurobindo. The government was already apprehensive and began to seek an opportunity to remove him from the scene of action. Two prosecutions for sedition were launched: one against some articles in the "*Yugantar*" and another against some letter to the editor and articles in the "*Bande Mataram*" which had been reproduced from "*Yugantar*". But the government was completely worsted in both the attempts. The authorship of the "*Yugantar*" articles was owned to by the brother of Swami Vivekananda and he was therefore sentenced. Regarding those in the "*Bande Mataram*" the prosecution had no real evidence to prove Aurobindo's authorship. However, as soon as he learned that he was going to be arrested, he went to the police station. But he was soon released on bail. When the case came up for hearing, the Chief Presidency Magistrate Mr. Kingsford not only acquitted him but also declared that the general tone of "*Bande Mataram*" was not seditious!

The Bande Mataram case did one signal service for the cause. Overnight, not only the journal but also its main inspiration and leader writer was brought suddenly and very prominently before the public eye. The gifted writer and the dedicated soul behind the daily outpourings of the journal now became the idol of the nation. It was like the refulgent sun, so long hidden be-

hind the clouds, bursting into full view Aurobindo could no longer act from behind the scenes and his life for the next three years had to be lived in the full glare of publicity however much his temperament was unsuited to it. As he once said, he only suffered publicity when it was necessary in the cause of Truth.

The government, no doubt, was very much discomfited by its failure to convict Aurobindo on the charge of sedition. The fact of the matter was that apart from the lack of evidence, Aurobindo's writing maintained a very high level and was always free from hatred and incitement to violence. His emphasis was on love for Mother India and sacrifice of everything for her. He spoke in terms of a religion and a gospel and not in terms of ordinary political jargon. He pitted self-rule against foreign rule however good the latter might be. It was difficult, therefore to find a legal excuse for silencing him. *"The Statesman"* once complained that the articles in *"Bande Mataram"* were legally unassailable though full of sedition! The same paper also paid a compliment to the cleverness of the writer and to his skill in the use of the English language. Though Aurobindo could not communicate his full spirit to his three assistants, Shyam Sunder Chakravarty had picked up his style marvellously well. It was sometimes difficult to discover the exact writer of particular articles. The imitation was so perfect

The Bande Mataram case definitely increased in a number of ways the responsibilities of Aurobindo. He had to resign his post at the National College in order to avert suspicion by the government. The mantle of leadership of the nationalist party now fell upon him openly and he had to devote further time for organising t So, action was no longer a matter of his choice. Round about this time from October to the middle of December 1906 Aurobindo suffered a severe illness and stayed for sometime in Deoghar and for sometime at the house of his father-in-law in Serpentine Lane, Calcutta. The illness is describ-

ed as being a very serious one But he had hardly any rest or respite Positive obligations of editing, conducting, and financing "*Bande Mataram*" were his together with other duties of public speaking attending public functions consolidating and leading the nationalist element, and so on A letter to Mrinalini at this time is very revealing He fondly complains of the burden that God has been pleased to heap upon his shoulders, and at the same time he begs of her to send him her best wishes, so that like a warrior knight he may venture forth with greater enthusiasm and with surer self-confidence He exhorts her to act as his *Sahadharmini and his Shakti.*

The immediate task before him in the latter part of 1907 was to organize the nationalist party in Bengal for securing victory at Surat Congress In fact, after Aurobindo s success at the provincial conference in Midnapore where his party carried all resolutions by an overwhelming majority Lokamanya Tilak invited him to go to Surat with a large number of members. The major political parties had decided to measure their strength there The moderates had stalwarts like Phirozeshah Mehta Gokhale and Rash Behari Ghose The extremists were led by Lokamanya Tilak. The former were struggling hard to keep Congress at a safe distance from all active and extremist agitation Though extreme resolutions had been passed under pressure at Calcutta there was no talk about their implementation The extremists considered it highly stultifying to see the only nationwide organisation which had already been speaking for a quarter century in the name of the country sitting with folded hands while a challenge had been thrown by the imperial rulers

The stage therefore was set for a struggle and the nationalists who were in the opposition had to prepare for a show-down. Before the beginning of the regular sessions, the nationalists met under the presidentship of Aurobindo and it was decided to force the issue by challenging the moderates in the matter of electing the president and by proposing an alternative name

The critical moment came and Lokamanya Tilak proposed a motion for temporary adjournment with a view to re-opening the question of the president's election. Tilak was declared to have no right to do anything like that. He stood firm and adamant however insisting on his right to a hearing. A mild attempt on the part of the moderates was made to remove Tilak from the platform. This proved to be a signal for general uproar. Shoes and chairs went into the air swinging hither and thither and the meeting broke up in confusion. Immediately afterwards, the nationalists met in protest and pledged themselves to carry the new gospel to the people. Again Aurobindo who was mainly responsible for the decision to break away rather than surrender to the moderate [illegible] presided, and he called upon the young men assembled to take a vow to sacrifice their all for the mother country and never to rest till freedom was won.

The Surat Congress session of December 1907 ended in a fiasco but made history. The result was that the moderates continued to possess only the body of the Congress while the spirit went out along with the extremists. For the next ten years, Indian nationalism flourished outside the precincts of the national organisation. When it returned to the charge in 1916 it completely routed the moderates, who later continued their existence outside the Congress as a small and not very influential coterie. They almost ceased to be a political force in the country.

A[illegible] triumph was complete in the Surat imbroglio in so far as [illegible] shock had been administered to complacent [illegible] politicians. A new avenue opened before the younger spirits who were eager for a militant programme. He had a new responsibility also of propagating the aggressive nationalism for which he and his friends thought it necessary to wreck even the Congress session. Therefore instead of returning straight to Calcutta he responded to the calls of a number of cities to address them beginning with Baroda. He then visited Bombay

Poona Nasik and Amraoti In all places he was received with great warmth He delivered lectures which proved to be stirring and inspiring

Parallel with intense political activity but as a deeper under current, Aurobindo again had some experiences of a spiritual nature the full meaning and significance of which was deep and far reaching The Yogic Sadhana he had begun in Baroda was continual and his progress quite rapid in spite of external activity He felt at that stage that he should consult an authority on Yoga. Therefore, while in Baroda Lele was urgently invited to visit him. At a telegraphic call from Barindra Ghose he came from Gwalior and in the last week of December 1907 had long consultations with Aurobindo It was during these important talks that Lele measured the great strides that his friend had made and suggested that he should concentrate on making his mind a complete blank—Nirvishaya—so that the Divine might enter and take possession In this practice the intrepid seeker succeeded and he later attained a stage when he could suspend the ego and all its multifarious trappings and deliver himself completely into the hands of the Spirit Thenceforward, he was in a position to say that he was a puppet in the hands of his Maker and was himself but a Nimittamatra a mere instrument A letter to his wife at about this time mentions that he was no longer his own master and that in future he would live and move according to the dictates of the Supreme

Lele travelled with him to Bombay and to Poona and then returned to his own home Aurobindo had attained a certain equanimity and could establish peace within himself The question arose as to what he should do about delivery of his message and his mission on which he was so set Lele solved the difficulty by suggesting that while he stood before an audience he should suspend the process of conscious thought close his eyes for a moment and then face the audience with folded hands as if he were in the presence of God Himself Lele assured him

that the needed utterance would then come without effort. It did happen like that in Bombay and the audience was held spell-bound. Aurobindo was never an eloquent orator as so many demagogues are. He spoke in simple slow English. His words appeared to come directly from the heart rather than from the brain. The effect on the audience was tremendous. The stamp of sincerity was evident in every word and more than anything else, the depth of feeling was so impressive.

Throughout his speeches, he emphasised the gospel of nationalism. While speaking in Bombay he said that nationalism was not a mere political programme. It was a religion that had come from God. It could not be crushed, it was immortal. He preached faith in God and in the mission of India. Service of the Mother sacrifice for her self-help and Swadeshi, these and the other eternal virtues of heroes and of men of God were the burden of his inspired song of patriotism. These sentiments coming from him as from a highly-charged dynamo, thrilled his audiences and for the time being, they felt spiritually lifted and became conscious of something deeper in themselves. He was at once the seer and the prophet of nationalism in India, the preacher and poet of pure patriotism, the pioneer and the torch-bearer of the great army that was to lead a crusade against all that was gross and evil.

Aurobindo returned to Calcutta after his triumphant tour of the important cities and was again caught up in the whirl of constant activity Now not only the youth of Bengal but of the whole of India looked to him for inspiration. In every mind that had an iota of idealism or a touch of spirituality his message evoked a ready response. While this was the case with the new militant and fastspreading creed of nationalism after the Surat debacle, the government looked at the picture from quite a different angle. They took the split in Congress as an excellent opportunity for suppressing the more aggressive elements in Indian politics and began their preparations.

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In the course of propagation of the creed of nationalism and the elaboration of the programme of the fight for freedom Aurobindo developed his ideas further It is highly interesting to note how similar were his ideas to those of Mahatma Gandhi who later, in 1920 was to present to the country his complete and detailed technique of nonviolent non-cooperation His ground and approach, however, was different It has already been made clear that *Aurobindo was not a pacifist in the Gandhian sense*; but the study of the objective conditions of India and the reading of the mind of the people drove both him and Lokamanya to the same conclusions to which Gandhiji came in 1920 Both Tilak and Aurobindo however knew that there were some hot heads preparing for a bloody revolution. Both felt that that was the logical result of severe repression At the same time, both equally knew that that was not the way which would lead to national regeneration They sympathised with the aspirations of the youths engaged in these activities but they were neither personally connected with any conspiracy nor were they in touch with organized violent programmes and activities. It is thought necessary to state this matter here clearly because, at one stage *or another the government sought to implicate them directly in* violent conspiracies to overthrow the government.

It has already been indicated that the government had decided to take the path of repression So much so, that Lord Minto, who had succeeded Lord Curzon as Viceroy and continued the policy of repression with a heavy hand was addressed by Lord Morley then State Secretary as follows I must confess to you that I am watching with the deepest concern and dismay the thundering sentences that are being passed for sedition etc. We must keep order but excess of severity is not the path to order On the contrary, *it is the path to the bomb* It was exactly the same sentiment as was expressed in "*Kesari* a Marathi weekly conducted by Tilak in an article entitled *Bombche Rahasya* (the Secret of the Bomb) and which earned for Tilak not only a pro-

secution but also jail for six years! This was written subsequent to the bombthrow by Khodiram at Muzaffarpur Bureaucracy had already decided to remove Tilak from the scene of action and the sedition case was launched.

The same bureaucratic attitude was adopted throughout India. And Bengal happened to be a storm-centre since it was the partition of this province that had set the country ablaze. It was not only agitators who were the targets but also editors public men and students. An atmosphere of suppressed fear of terror and of uncertainty prevailed in almost all the important towns. Proceedings were drawn against Brambabandhava Upadhyaya, a noted Bengali journalist, but long before the trial he died in a hospital in Calcutta A young boy Sushil Sen of Calcutta, was ordered to be flogged in court ostensibly for having shouted "*Bande Mataram* or for some other such technical offence. These two incidents seem to have incenced two youths who thought of murdering Mr Kingsford then the District Judge of Muzaffarpur

The boys threw a bomb at the supposed carriage of Mr Kingsford on the 10th of April 1908. It was a wholly misdirected bomb thrown by two utterly misled youths of Bengal. The victims proved to be Mrs. Pringle-Kennedy and her daughter who were entirely innocent of all politics. Shyam Sunder Chakravarty wrote editorially in the "*Bande Mataram*" that "outrages of this kind have absolutely no sanction in our ancient tradition and culture" and that it was but a poor imitation of the western cult of anarchy It was, he said quite foreign to the true and noble nationalism for which Bengal and India stood. But the government took quite a different view and made it a starting point for letting loose the forces of ruthless repression and removing every one of worth from the political field.

The Muzaffarpur outrage was the first of its kind in India. Outside the small circle which might have organized it, none hailed or admired it The reactions naturally varied in different

quarters. The European community and the Anglo-Indian press took an alarmist view and called for severe suppression. The younger generation in India looked upon it as a deed of daring, irrespective of its merits or demerits and was thrilled. The moderate element condemned the whole affair in no uncertain terms. The nationalists too openly repudiated it but did not question the motive and the sacrifice involved. They pointed out that this was a symptom of the mounting desperation of the country and that the government should take it as a warning and treat it not as a challenge but as a pointer to where their repressive policy was leading.

The police began investigations and a miniature bomb factory was soon discovered at Maniktolla. A number of people were arrested including Barindra, Aurobindo's brother, who was thought to be the brain behind the whole plot. Aurobindo was also suspected and arrested while in his bed at 5 a.m. on the 5th of May 1908. He was to be led to prison in ropes! But Bhupen Basu persuaded the police to abandon the idea and got the rope round his waist removed. The surreptitious and cruel manner of his arrest and the unseemly search that followed are the subject of a Bengali book "*Kara Kahini*" by Aurobindo himself. The police however found nothing in the search. He was then living with his wife Mrinalini and his sister Sarojini. He was about to begin editing "*Navashakti*", a Bengali daily and had moved to new premises with that view. Besides Aurobindo and his brother Barindra, thirty-four others were implicated and hauled up for trial. Then followed the long and tortuous trial throughout the whole of the next year.

It can be said without exaggeration that Aurobindo's arrest created as much sensation as the bomb-throw itself. Universal resentment was felt and the fact that he was sought to be led to jail in ropes was condemned everywhere. The trial, known as the Maniktolla Bomb Case or the Alipore Case, was conducted within the precincts of the jail itself and is probably one of the

most famous political trials in Indian history It was significant, especially in one particular which was that one of the accused was Aurobindo, the saintly patriot. Throughout the trial he was nonchalant and hardly followed the proceedings. He was busy with what he often called "his own work" Prompted by his inner voice, he entrusted the case entirely to Chittaranjan Das, a young and rising advocate who later led Bengal in politics for many years with distinction and success.

While the case dragged on, supreme efforts were made by the prosecution to implicate Aurobindo and secure a conviction. No less a legal luminary than Eardley Norton was engaged by the government. But all was of no avail and Aurobindo emerged innocent, unscathed and triumphant. The able and prophetic advocacy of Chittaranjan raised the trial almost to an epic level. His famous final appeal to the court still rings in the ears because it has proved to be true to the letter He said to Mr Beachcroft, who was the judge in the case. "My appeal to you is this, that long after the controversy will be hushed in silence, long after this turmoil and the agitation will have ceased, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity Long after he is dead and gone, his words will be echoed and re-echoed, not only in India but across distant seas and lands. Therefore, I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this court, but before the bar of the High Court of History " The two assessors in the case declared Aurobindo "not guilty" on the 13th of April, 1909. About three weeks later the judge acquitted him while he sentenced most of the other accused to various terms of imprisonment.

No doubt, by reason of its being the first bomb conspiracy case, it has a sufficiently important place in our history But more than the trial and his subsequent dramatic acquittal, the most important event during Aurobindo's stay in jail was his reaching the acme of spiritual endeavour It was his most valuable

achievement. For long, he had been denied any rest, any seclusion, any relief from the constant strain of public life He felt that he wanted some respite badly and yet he saw no way of getting it Here an opportunity offered itself He called it his "Ashramvas' It led him through intense Sadhana to the very summit of God-consciousness He saw the mystic vision of Shri Krishna everywhere and experienced the charms of ineffable unitive life. For him the jail, the jailor, the police, the court, the accuser, the judge all were transformed and became but the manifestations of one Vasudeo "Vasudevah Sarvam" If only a year ago, he had realized that he was but an instrument of God he now saw vividly nothing but God all round him. Throughout his jail-life, the Gita and its full message had sunk into every nook and cranny of his consciousness and he emerged a full-fledged God inspired man of vision who had seen God face to face and had felt his immanence in every atom of the universe

He made no secret of his great experience. His *Uttarpara* speech of 30th May, in 1909 delivered three weeks after his acquittal is full of the vision he had had and the realization he had attained Many papers, especially *'The Indian Social Reformer'* edited by Kamakshi Natarajan and *"Bengalee* edited by Surendranath Jauhar criticised and ridiculed the religious slant in Aurobindo But he cared not for their opinion. It was no longer with him a matter of intellectual conviction or of blind faith but he had had a vivid and vital experience of a *Spiritual Presence filling the whole universe which was* but His manifestation This experience thus set the seal for the *time* being on his Sadhana. He had yet to go through another lap of public activity before retiring to Pondicherry his final Ashram, where he would attain still higher spiritual summits and from where he would preach his unique gospel

Aurobindo emerged from Alipore a changed man and stepped into a changed India. Jail had not only given him a *vision of* God but had also transformed him from a flaming agitator

into a mature and serene political philosopher. The emphasis on Yoga for all humanity had now strengthened. He saw that the steam roller of repression had silenced many a voice and stopped many a pen and sent all the topmost agitators to jail. In his Uttarpara speech he made a feeling reference to Tilak: "I find all changed. One who always sat by my side and was associated in my work is a prisoner in Burma." He realized also that the enthusiasm once manifested through the million-throated shouts of Bande Mataram had cooled into a sullen but ominous silence. And yet he carried on his work as he saw the hand of God even in repression. "Without suffering there can be no growth" he said. He proceeded with indomitable faith in the future.

It was unfortunate that "*Bande Mataram*" had ceased publication during his incarceration. Now however he decided to launch a new organ for a fresh and deeper gospel. He published "*Karmayogin*" weekly in English, and "*Dharma*" a weekly in Bengali. In these journals he almost transcended the political plane although his politics had never been mere politics. He thought that all life was *Karmayoga* if lived in the true spirit of the Gita, and all life was "*Dharma*" true religion, if dedicated to winning Him through constant Sadhana. He had, however, to deal with politics and political problems and even with political controversies in the columns of his new journals. This was inevitable since he continued to champion, practically single handed, the nationalism which he had been so instrumental in building up and in popularising. But his stress was now more and more on the spiritual approach and the higher attitude, even in dealing with mundane and day-to-day affairs.

He spent about ten months more in the field before retiring for good from active life, to the great place of Tapas where he continued for forty uninterrupted years his almost lifelong Sadhana. But those few months were full of activity and brilliant contributions were made to constructive political thought, to the

interpretation of Indian culture to the gospel of nationalism, and above all to the spiritual way of life, which he emphasised as peculiarly Indian. Along with other greater things, his writings sought to resuscitate the flagging political zeal, to defend the nationalist standpoint and to fill the people with faith and hope in the future of India. But he did not see much immediate hope of reviving the old fire. In the meanwhile the Morley-Minto reforms and their acceptance by the moderate school of thinkers further demoralised the political atmosphere.

Next to spiritual and vigorous cultural ideas, the most valuable legacies left by Aurobindo through the columns of "*Karmayogin*" are his political policies and programmes as well as his ideas about constructive nationalism. When he came out of jail, he was practically alone in giving authoritative expression to extremist views and in giving a lead to the country in these matters. Most others of his stature had been either deported or were behind bars. He bore the brunt of criticism of Anglo-Indian as well as of moderate papers and in clear ringing tones continued to plan the path for the nationalists. It was another matter that there was not sufficient stamina left in the people at that time. That made Aurobindo feel increasingly that the fight would have to be carried on in later times and by other leaders.

When challenged by one of the speeches of G.K. Gokhale doubting the peaceful intentions of the nationalists, Aurobindo retaliated in one of his speeches with a masterly statement. He said: "We have told the people that there is a peaceful means of achieving independence in whatever form we aspired to it. We have said that by self-help, by passive resistance, we can achieve it. Passive resistance means two things. It means first that in certain matters we shall not co-operate with the government of this country until it gives us what we consider our rights. Secondly, if we are persecuted, if the plough of repression is passed over us, we shall meet it, not by violence, but by suffering, by passive resistance, by lawful means. We have not said to our

young men, 'when you are repressed, retaliate' we have said, 'suffer' We are showing the people of this country in passive resistance the only way in which they can satisfy their legitimate aspiration without breaking the law and without resorting to violence." This might well have been drafted by Gandhiji himself! In an 'Open Letter to My Countrymen dated July 1909 Aurobindo outlined a six-point programme which included self-help, peaceful passive resistance non-cooperation with the government till control had been transferred, Swadeshi and effective boycott.

His series of articles, on "*The Brain of India*" were calculated to be essays on education, and are in vigorous defence of the principles of education, followed by ancient India. In them Aurobindo asks, what was the secret of the grand structure of culture and civilization which India had raised to heights, almost unapproached by any other country Not merely in religion and philosophy not merely in the world of ideas, of thought and of logic, but also in the practical field of politics and administration, of industry and economics, of arts and sciences, of social organisation and happy living, India had progressed vastly and continuously for century upon century What, he asked, was the vitality due to? Whence came this vigorous variety of forms in which individual and social life in India manifested itself? After a few years, he developed the latter theme more elaborately and to its full capacity in a series of articles published in *Arya*" known as "*A Defence of Indian Culture*" They were in reply to William Archer's superficial attack on the cultural ideals and achievements of India. But here Aurobindo s limited aim was to discover the tap-root of all creative life and he pointed out that Brahmacharya and spiritual Sadhana of the highest type along the path of Yoga were the foundations of India s educational system. He pleaded for the application of the same principles to modern life and education in a modified and suitable form. He did not mean mechanical revival but recapture of the ancient spirit with a view to utilising

it in new terms and according to modern conditions. He believed first and foremost in the Spirit, but at the same time affirmed its manifestation in and through matter The whole universe was all one movement of the Divine It was in the light of that realization that he aimed at reconstructing the whole of life "It is the Spirit alone that saves', he declared in the "*Karmayogin*', 'and only by becoming great and free in heart, can we become socially and politically great and free" His nationalism also aimed at a fuller and wider life in the human family, when once India had regained her lost soul The individual was never lost in the family, nor the family in the country

Thus he hammered on eternal themes as well as on topical and political matters But whatever he dealt with, his deep vision, his insight into the heart of things his clarity of ideas was transparent. His masterly English phrase, often forceful and sometimes poetic, never forsook him, whatever the subject. At the Hooghly political conference in September 1909, he carried the delegates with him in passing the nationalist resolutions. But all the time he inwardly felt the call for seclusion The call to attend to the urges in the higher regions of his consciousness was imperative He was fully assured of the future political destiny of India and felt that he could now cease to lead the movement He visualised that other times and new leaders would bring about its consummation. It was this urge and realization that ultimately led him out of the political field and into those ethereal regions where one has to battle with far subtler forces to win greater triumphs, of a kind known and experienced only by spirits, comparatively free from attachment to the lower planes of consciousness.

Meanwhile, in July 1909 there were reliable intimations from Sister Nivedita that Aurobindo would again be arrested and this time his prize would be deportation. She had her own sources of information. But such things never worried Aurobindo. With the experience of his many prosecutions he knew

that he lived a charmed life and the net of bureaucracy was not capable of holding him. One thing was obvious however, he could not stay in India and yet be out of and free from politics.

It was at this juncture, 30th July 1909 that Aurobindo published his "*Open Letter to My Countrymen*" which he considered to be his last political will and testament. As envisaged by him, its contents effectively changed the intentions of the government. In it he exhorted nationalists not to be unnerved by the coming or going of leaders. He said, "all great movements wait for their God-sent leader the willing channel of His force and only when he comes, move forward triumphantly to their fulfilment. Therefore the Nationalist party the custodians of the future must wait for the man who is to come. " This appeared to be the end of his agitation but, for months afterwards, until as late as February 1910 he continued his work unabated. Finally the decision was taken out of his hands. The inner call was urgent and he left for Chandernagore in French territory He stayed there in seclusion for about a month and a half and silently pursued his Sadhana of Yoga. He did not find the place very convenient however and on the 4th of April 1910 landed at Pondicherry from the steamer "Dupleix"

A very petty-minded allegation was made by the government authorities that Aurobindo left Indian territory to avoid arrest. Aurobindo issued a statement in "*The Madras Times*" that he had retired to Pondicherry in response to a call for the pursuit of higher Yoga and that the warrant which he was alleged to have tried to avoid was actually issued after he reached Pondicherry' Moreover when the government pursued the matter by prosecuting the printer of the "Open Letter" which was responsible for the warrant being issued for Aurobindo s arrest, the result vindicated Aurobindo. It is true the printer was convicted in the lower court but Mr Justice Woodroffe and Mr Justice Fletcher of the High Court acquitted him and declared that

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only manifestations. What mattered to him was the essence the spirit, the ground, that which, without "itself changing was the cause of this eternally changing world." No doubt, at the beginning of his career other things had absorbed him. But the inner promptings and the decisive urges of his heart were always there and ultimately they drove him to the exclusive domain of the spirit which claimed him as if he were its permanent denizen. It welcomed him as the proverbial prodigal son. Many attempts were made to tempt him back to the world especially to the field of politics. Great need was often felt for a leader of his calibre. Lala Lajpat Rai also invited him. In 1920 Joseph Baptista offered him the editorial chair of a new nationalist journal to be published in Bombay Chittaranjan Das again tried to persuade him to return in 1922, but Aurobindo told him that he was after a higher reality and that if he should return, it would be only after attaining a new poise which would help him to give a fresh orientation to everything Bengal asked him to return after Chittaranjan's passing when there was a vacuum. Rabindra Nath Tagore who had warmly greeted him in 1908, now in 1928 personally told him that everyone was waiting for his word. He had but to say it and all would follow The Mahatma, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi also made an attempt to recall him by sending as a special messenger his own son Devdas Gandhi. The Congress Gadi was ready for him. But nothing could lure him back. The work that he was absorbed in was so intense of such universal significance, so integral, and so important from his point of view that he thought fit to ignore the highest opportunities and to continue along the course he had adopted. Judging from where we are today we cannot but say that India and the world are by far richer for Aurobindo's continuance of his great Sadhana. Although apparently inactive all those forty years in Pondicherry he was intensely and inwardly active. The full history of that period in his life can now never be written. But it represents one continuous, great

the "Open Letter" was not at all seditious!

CHAPTER VI

TO PONDICHERRY AND—

In this chapter I shall detail some of the more important facts and events during Aurobindo's stay in Pondicherry. An account of his Sadhana is reserved for a subsequent chapter.

After hectic activity for about ten months, Aurobindo moved to a permanent abode at Pondicherry. It proved to be at once a sanctuary and an Ashram for his unique Sadhana and exceptional Siddhi. It became a centre from which radiated the new gospel of Integral Yoga as well as a home for those who sought *new life and light. It turned out to be a place of pilgrimage* for the numerous men and women who were attracted by his great teaching. Finally, it developed into a Yoga bhoomi (a place for Yoga practices) for hundreds of intense Sadhaks and into a laboratory for building a new humanity on fresh foundations. In addition, it is now a temple where the sacred remains of the Master rest, after his great soul chose to depart from its mortal coil perhaps to find a pivotal point for higher researches in the Infinite.

For forty long years Aurobindo lived in this French Indian (now wholly Indian) seaside town. But can we really say that he actually spent those years in that town or in that house or in those houses? It might well be that his body was there the whole time. But his consciousness was an unrestrained and yet purposeful wanderer in the realms of the spirit exploring new regions and hewing fresh paths. In fact, he lived mostly in the inner world, probing into its innumerable mysteries, taking measure of the depths of consciousness. That was the world of which he was most conscious and about which he was most inquisitive. All else for him was outer trappings, mere names and forms,

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At the end of March, Aurobindo received an inner call to proceed to Pondicherry. Soon arrangements were made for his departure. He had to take the steamer from Calcutta and did so under an assumed name, "Jyotindranath Mitra". A number of difficulties arose and at one time delay seemed inevitable. But ultimately he reached Pondicherry at the beginning of April. All along, his attitude had been one of supreme indifference. His companions could see that there was no sign of care or anxiety about him. "He was quite firm, unmoved and steady. He sat almost like a statue, as if in meditation." Nagen Guharay writes, "I had heard of him no doubt. But here I could see him without the least care or anxiety. He was free from fear. He was wholly detached."

In Pondicherry there were already a few self-exiles from the South notably the Tamil poet Subrahmanya Bharati, Srinivasachari and Krishnamachari. A Tamil weekly "*India*" was being conducted from there. At first, the exiles did not believe Motilal Roy's messenger when he told them that Aurobindo was on his way there. They feared that it might be police trickery and therefore did not take the message seriously. Ultimately however as an emergency measure, it was arranged that Aurobindo should stay at Shankara Chetty's house in Komti Street. Bharati and others received him at the port on the 4th of April 1910. He was taken to and lived in Chetty's house till October.

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One day in February 1910, when he was in his office Ramachandra Mazumdar an employee suddenly brought word to Aurobindo that the office was going to be raided and himself arrested Such rumours were neither new nor extraordinary Although it was known that there was no warrant against him Aurobindo, somehow on that day heard an urgent "voice' which told him to go to Chandernagore Within ten minutes, he and two of his companions were on a boat and on their way They reached Chandernagore the next day! Before leaving the only arrangement he made was to send a note to Nivedita asking her to edit "*Karmayogin* This she did in his absence. Aurobindo s detachment was so complete that once he left Calcutta, he did not write a single line for the paper

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One of them enquired about the significance of the vision of a lotus. Aurobindo told Paul that it was the symbol of the awakening of the inner consciousness and was usually seen when the mind was on a subtler plane.

It may be noted here that it was on the 29th of March 1914 that Mira met and spoke with Aurobindo at Pondicherry for the first time. She entered in her diary on the following day: "He whom we saw yesterday is on earth, his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be indeed established on earth

The visit in the same year of K. V. Rangaswami, zamindar of Kodiyaram near Trichinopoly is another event worth mentioning. He came to seek Aurobindo because his family Guru, Yogi Nagai Japta, had predicted the coming of a Mahayogi from the north and had advised him to seek that yogi's spiritual guidance. When on the eve of his passing Japta was asked how the Mahayogi was to be recognised, he said that he would come south to escape some obstacles and that three of his characteristics would already have been advertised. This description fitted Aurobindo: the three characteristics were those which he had already mentioned in his August letter to Mrinalini and they had been published. Rangaswami saw Aurobindo occasionally. It is known that he offered some financial help. As a result of their relationship a book was published by Rangaswami at his own cost called '*Yogic Sadhana*' which had been dictated when the planchette was invoked. The author's note is signed "*Uttar Yogi*" and was written by Aurobindo himself, but as he was not the direct author of the book, its publication was discontinued after 192

Nothing of grea importance happened till the publication of the *Arya* on 15th ugust, 1914. But some facts are worth noting. Aurobindo continued his Sadhana and seldom went out of the house. It was a great event for instance, when he went

Aurobindo to join them in the political work they were doing But he was then completely absorbed in Yoga and so begged to be excused. He would not see anybody without some important cause. He lived on the first floor and came down but once a day for his bath. He had three companions Suresh Chandra Chakravarti, Bejoy Kumar Nag and Sourin. Nolini Kanta Gupta joined them next year They all worked for and served Aurobindo.

Comparatively, they all lived a very hard life. All except Aurobindo slept on the ground. One of the companions would prepare tea for him twice a day once in the morning and once in the afternoon The host was a vegetarian and supplied at noon a simple lunch consisting of rice, vegetables, rasam (tamarind soup) and sambhar (dal-curry). In the evenings a cup of kheer or payas (milk pudding) was usually taken by Aurobindo. Without offending the religious sentiments of the household, his companions sometimes feasted Aurobindo on an egg preparation.

In October, Aurobindo moved to another of Shankar Chetty's houses in the south of the town. There he paid some rent till about April 1911 The self-help arrangement of cooking in turn, continued They could now partake of meat and fish. There was hardly any furniture except a campcot two chairs and a table. A servant was engaged only after "*Arya*" was started in 1914!

During the year Paul Richard visited Pondicherry for the first time in connection with his election to the Chamber of Deputies In this however, he failed. He met Aurobindo and for two days spent several hours with him. His first impression was, that Aurobindo was as near to him as an elder brother and was a man of vast intelligence. In 1918 he hailed Aurobindo as the coming leader of Asia in his book "*Dawn over Asia*

An interesting incident regarding Mira Richard (Mrs. Paul Richard), a Sadhika from a very early age, may be mentioned here. She sent with Paul Richard a few queries regarding Yoga.

should start a monthly philosophical review a decision was taken on the 1st of June and "*Arya*" was the result. The Richards agreed to bear all initial expenses. The monthly started with a subscribers list of two hundred and later became self-supporting

During this same year Mother (Mira Richard) visited Aurobindo in the afternoons and sometimes took coconut sweets for him. She would prepare cocoa for him and Richard also would be there to share it with all. Every Sunday Aurobindo and his house party dined with the Richards.

It was also in 1914 that Aurobindo translated into English "*Sagar Sangeet*" Bengali songs by Chittaranjan Das. Unasked Chittaranjan paid one thousand rupees for the work.

Aurobindo read his papers at about 9 a.m. in the morning and saw visitors between 10 and 11 a.m. Lunch was served between 12 and 12-30 p.m. In the evenings it became usual for the poet Bharati, Shrinivasachari and others to call for conversation. This meant that the rule of strict seclusion to which Aurobindo had resorted during earlier years had then slackened. On some important occasions, he visited the homes of friends and important Frenchmen, such as the Mayor of the city He opened the "Aryan Stores" which was financially supported by the Richards.

Though Aurobindo s financial condition had improved since 1914 it cannot be said that there was much added comfort to his way of life. For about six years, he lived in a house which could not boast of a bath; all bathed under the only running tap.

In February 1915, a call for Paul Richard to render military service came f om the French government. He had to respond. His wife Mira, went away with him. They were not to return for the next few years.

The year 1920 was a very important one. It brought the good news of Barindra s release. The Richards returned to Pondicherry An offer to Aurobindo was made by Bal Gangadhar

to the house of Shrinivasachari for the marriage of Shrinivasa's daughter

Financial difficulties continued. Houses had to be often changed It was only after starting the "*Arya*" that Aurobindo was able to continue his stay in one house which he did from 1914 to 1922 He could just spare about ten rupees per month for books. Meat and fish were not tasted sometimes for days together Publication of his books was made by the Pravartak Sangh, but there was not much sale in the beginning

There were two events during this period which go to show that the police of the British government were still after the blood of Aurobindo. One was a house search An *agent provocateur* had falsely written to the police regarding revolutionary literature which he claimed was being produced and stored by Shrinivasachari, V V S. Iyer and others. It was also suspected that they had contacts with the exiles and revolutionaries who were abroad, such as Shyamji Krishna Varma and Madame Cama A French Police officer searched Aurobindo's house He found nothing incriminating To his astonishment, he found Greek and Latin manuscripts written by Aurobindo. This filled the officer with admiration for Aurobindo and he became his friend

Another attempt to find some evidence against Aurobindo was made when one Beerendra Roy a spy of the British government, obtained entry into the house as a domestic servant to a T B. patient who had come to seek help from Aurobindo After months of stay the spy confessed to Aurobindo his real motive and afterwards ran away He solemnly declared however that he had not made reports against either Aurobindo or anybody in the party

The year 1914 was very important since it was then that Mira and Paul Richard made a long stay in Pondicherry which gave time for their friendship to develop. On 29th March, Mira had a long talk with Aurobindo Paul proposed that they

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Tilak through Joseph Baptista to edit a new English nationalist paper in Bombay The now famous replies to Barindra's and Baptista's letters written by Aurobindo in that year explain his position very clearly The coming of Mother (Mira Richard) brought about a thorough overhaul of the household arrangements. She returned on April 24 1920, and began to wear the Sari in Indian fashion, from June.

Generally, things brightened after Mother's arrival at Aurobindo's residence in Pondicherry Food arrangements improved. A bath was provided on the upper storey for Aurobindo The Ashram did not properly start until 24th November 1926, but the number of visitors and other activities soon began to increase.

Barindra came to see Aurobindo in 1921 and they decided to start a spiritual centre in Bhowanipur in Calcutta It was opened, but unfortunately did not continue for long William Pearson from Santiniketan James Cousins, Sarala Devi Chowdhurani, Dr Munje, Avinash Bhattacharya of "*Bande mataram* days, Colonel Josiah Wedgewood of the British Parliament, were some of the prominent people to visit Aurobindo in the course of 1920-21 His sister Srimati Sarojini went to him in 1921 In the way of financial help he gave her the publication rights of *War and Self-determination* Sadhaks by now began to come and stay round about in independent houses.

The simple daily routine of Aurobindo at that time was to take two cups of tea at 7 a m and three slices of bread and butter He lunched at 11-30 a.m. after his bath—Aurobindo was always the last to bathe. Afternoon tea was taken at 3 30 p m. and dinner served at 9-30 p.m.

The several people who stayed with Aurobindo about July 1920, included Barindra, Mother Rishikesh Kanjilal Rameswar De Natwardas Amrita and Miss Hudson. Nolini, Indulekha and Moni, returned from Bengal in August.

As the number of inmates increased, the question of food and

taste became more and more complicated. Aurobindo on one occasion said to a Sadhak, "One should not insist on a particular kind of food of a particular taste. There is no substance in such insistance. You have a body and you have to maintain it in good condition. Inferior types of food weaken and spoil the body. Therefore, good food should be eaten. Good food means good for the body, not that which is good for taste." He considered that oil, soap and such other things were necessaries but tobacco was not.

Amarendra Chatterji, an associate of the revolutionary days, had taken Sanyas and was now "Kevalanand". He was working with some groups in Tanjore and other places. The Ashram people had received reports that some people were preaching Aurobindo's philosophy in those parts. One day this Sanyasi whose name in the old days was "Gabriel" presented himself and his group. Aurobindo recognised him immediately and he stayed there for some time. He was advised not to continue revolutionary activities.

At this time, arrangements were made with the Pravartak Sangh of Chandernagore and Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, for the publication of Aurobindo's books.

Keshav Ganesh Deshpande, Aurobindo's Cambridge friend who was now in charge of the Andheri Ashram started in the non-cooperation days, also came to meet Aurobindo.

When Chitta Ranjan Das started the Swaraj Party in 1923, he asked for Aurobindo's blessing, which was given. He then had some idea of exclusively devoting himself to Sadhana, but Aurobindo dissuaded him from doing so and asked him not to leave the political field.

In January 1922, Mother took entire charge of Aurobindo's household and organised it very systematically. After November 1926, when Aurobindo had fully retired from the world, she re-organised it on an Ashram basis. That continues even today.

Lala Lajpat Rai with Purushottam Das Tandon visited Pondicherry in 1925 and had long talks with Aurobindo.

Very few details are available from 1926 onwards. We know that in 1938 his thigh was suddenly flexed and he was ill for a long time. The foregoing events have been included here to give the reader some general idea of the happenings throughout this period.

Two of the important persons who saw Aurobindo during 1924 were Dilip Kumar Roy and T V Kapali Sastri. Both have since played very significant roles. Kapali Sastri, who was a profound Sanskrit scholar records a very lovely shine on the skin of Aurobindo He attributes it to Yogic Sadhana.

The day of Siddhi, the 24th of November 1926 at last arrived There were twenty four Sadhaks present and their names are given on page 97 of "*Dakshina*" dated November 1931

From that day Aurobindo retired into complete seclusion and for years continued his outside contacts only through the Mother She took charge of the Ashram as a whole

I should here revert to the "*Arya* and note a few details as this was Aurobindo s most important work during 1914-20.

The journal certainly contained contributions from Paul and Mira Richard as well as others. But the whole soul and spirit of the magazine was contained in the weighty contributions from the pen of Aurobindo He started a series of sequences, namely, *Essays on the Gita The Life Divine The Synthesis of Yoga, The Secret of the Veda The Ideal of Human Unity A Defence of Indian Culture The Psychology of Social Development* and so on. Thus every month readers were allowed an insight into the highly spiritual and mature mind of Aurobindo The articles treated subjects of philosophy religion ethics sociology art culture literature, and so forth. Some of them have now been revised edited and published in book-form Many of them undoubtedly are permanent contributions to world thought

If Aurobindo's contributions to "*Yugantar*" and "*Bande Mataram*" were replete with a vigorous nascent nationalism of an inspired patriot, comparable to that of Giuseppe Mazzini, if his writings in the "*Karmayogin*" and "*Dharma*" embodied the activistic philosophy of an intensely patriotic Vedantin, the outpourings—they were not laboured, as we know—in "*Arya*" were a consummate and complete picture of a vision of humanity of an integral philosophy and of the technique of Sadhana drawn by a Yogi perched on the dizzy heights of resplendent spirituality. To Aurobindo, the term Arya does not signify a race or a caste. To him, an Arya is one who ploughs, is one who breaks the ground, who is valorous, who is an indefatigable aspirant. An Arya is a conqueror of everything that comes in the way of the ever-mounting spiral of evolution. "For in everything, he (Arya) seeks truth, in everything right, in everything height and freedom. "

The "*Arya*" started with a twofold object mentioned below which was amply fulfilled.—

1. A systematic study of the highest problems of existence.

2. The formation of a vast synthesis of knowledge, harmonizing the diverse religious traditions of humanity occidental as well as oriental. Its method would be that of a realism, at once rational and transcendental, a realism consisting in the unification of intellectual and scientific disciplines with those of intuitive experience.

Arya also explained its ideal in the following words: "Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests; the resurgence of man out of the merely animal and economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence; the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true Supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which Science tells us

that we have issued These three are one for man s unit man's self-transcendence can come only by living in the spi

Aurobindo s philosophy is based on intuitive experience the object of his writing is to convey to the reader that ex ence and invite him to attain the heights to which these similar experiences led He had no interest in mere intelle things unless they were also capable of transforming life a leading to effective action. Therefore his Ashram did no come a journalist s office or develop into a mere library I a natural growth and the time soon came when organis became necessary It is remarkable that even after the pa away of the Master there has not been the least slackeni the organisation or discipline of the Ashram In course of it attracted more and more sincere Sadhaks who were be seeking truth in the way Aurobindo pointed out.

It is given to all and to every youthful mind especiall dream without restraint and to imagine even the impossible it is seldom given to anyone to realise his dreams, even part In the case of Aurobindo however, we have a person who, i course of a long and intensive life not only saw some c dreams realised but also himself played a very important ro their realisation. His statement on the 15th of August 1947 day of India s Independence is worthy of perusal and study

It was the day of his seventyfifth birthday as well as the of the declaration of India s Independence (*Mother In* Feb 1952, P 7) —

"On this day I can watch almost all the world moven which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though then looked like impracticable dreams arriving at fruition or on t way to achivement.

"The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movei which would create *a free and united India.*

"Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation o peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the pro

of human civilization.

"The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way· there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer

"A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for nations is also clear for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore in the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine will. But an outward basis is not enough, there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

"Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world, has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow· amid the disasters of the time, more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

"The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he

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the aroma of spiritualism he has shed, will continue to inspire generations yet unborn, not only in this land but also the world at large. India will worship and enshrine his memory and place him in the pantheon of its great seers and prophets"

Some may imagine that when in 1910 Aurobindo left the active field of politics, he shut himself up in an ivory tower and spun thoughts in a world of unreality and of imagination. But quite the contrary was the case. He was extremely alert to what was going on and alive to the very tips of his fingers. To a certain extent, he was in an advantageous position in that he could pool his experiences and observations on life in a cool and detached manner and base a philosophy of action on them, away from the passions and prejudices of the times. His writings, especially on art, literature poetry and culture, reveal the wide grasp he had, of movements not only in India but in the whole world. He was up-to-date in his knowledge of scientific development and his perspective was ever universal and it embraced the whole of humanity The more he sought seclusion and physical isolation, the more subtle and sensitive he became in his consciousness. Thus spirit and matter East and West, idealism and realism, idea and action, were equally and simultaneously present to him when he dealt with any problem of life. It was this approach and attitude that led him to an integral view and to a synthesised solution. He thought and lived and wrote and carried on Sadhana for the whole of humanity and gave a call to everyone to be prepared for the next step in evolution which was imminent. That next step he visualized was as great a leap above and beyond humanity as humanity itself was above and beyond the ape-life. His clarion call was not only for the divinization of oneself but for the divine to be brought into humanity so that it might be raised to a higher level of a subtler and purer consciousness.

first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there they will be overcome Here too if this evolution is to take place since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal the central movement may be here.

"Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation, whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India

While Sri Aurobindo's activities in the higher regions continued his body unfortunately became a victim to kidney trouble. *He resisted the attack and kept it in check for a long time. But eventually for reasons known only to himself he surrendered his* body and passed into regions unknown and unfathomed on the 5th December 1950.

I cannot resist the temptation here of quoting a spontaneous tribute paid on this occasion to this great Mahayogi of India by one of her noblest sons and the first citizen of the Republic of India Dr Rajendra Prasad. He wrote to me as follows on 5-12-50 from the Rashtrapati Bhavan New Delhi —

"I was grieved to hear of the message of the demise of Shri Aurobindo which you left for me this morning

A bold and intrepid thinker like the Rishis of old Shri Aurobindo was also a man of action Deeply read in western literature he took to a study of the rich lore of his land of birth, but he was not a student in the ordinary sense of the word His study of the written and spoken scriptures was reinforced and tested by prolonged and ceaseless sadhana. His body will no longer be seen, even by the fortunate few on the few special days in the year but the message he has left and

poems as Dante's "*Divina Commedia*" or Milton's "*Paradise Lost*" can be mentioned in the same breath with it. In one respect, however it far surpasses what has ever been written on this subject. Here what we come across is not merely any conventional story or tradition of a great race raised to the pitch of epic height and clothed in the dignity of noble imagery. These are really necessary for all high-class poetry. While reading "*Savitri*" we are led far beyond and behind the floating universe into the very secret chambers of the original creative will, and then along the eternal pilgrim's uncharted path to those remote reaches of consciousness which have remained unexplored, or at any rate unexpressed and unexplained since the very beginning of humanity. The mere attempt to understand fully the deeper meanings and the subtler implications involved, is often blinding. At times the reader has to turn back, rest a while and try to scale the heights again step by step, because at such places, each word is an image of a vivid vision and each line a rare, frozen truth of experience. One is at a loss to know how to characterize this poem of poems. It is a meeting-ground of the vision of a seer, the voice of a prophet, the inspiration of a poet, and the technique of an artist. All have blended in a superhuman effort here to enrich and embellish the saga of an earnest soul in quest of the Eternal.

Aurobindo's deep scholarship is nowhere more obvious than in his new interpretation and revealing commentary on the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Gita. His writings in this connection are not merely intellectual feats. They show us his power to enter into the very spirit of the Rishis and seize the inner connotation of ancient words and expressions. Most of the Vedic scholars have said that the Riks are but inspired babblings of infant humanity. Only Madhvacharya in his Rigbhashya (12th Cent. A.D.) asserts that all Riks have a triple meaning. Sayana emphasised the ritualistic interpretation. Personification, anthropomorphism and a prayerful mood induced by

CHAPTER VII

HIS UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

I HAVE attempted so far a brief outline of Aurobindo's life in the foregoing chapters. The next and subsequent ones will be devoted mainly to his Sadhana, Siddhi and teachings. Before proceeding futher I would like to acquaint readers with the special contribution that he may be said to have made in some other fields.

I have referred to many of his activities and said that the story of each one of them may well fill a volume. Here my ambition is humbler and I crave the indulgence of readers to be satisfied with a somewhat cursory treatment of this subject. I am not out to measure a colossus but shall feel amply repaid if I can but lay a wreath at its feet.

Aurobindo has to his credit a very remarkable record as a great scholar and man of letters. He has written voluminously and on a variety of subjects. His great originality, his rare mastery over the material he handles, and his inspired language combine to invest his writings with a quality and dignity which is very conspicuous. The subjects that he has specially written about are literature, politics, spirituality, philosophy, culture, yoga and sociology. In almost every one of these subjects his contribution has been unique. It has distinctly advanced the thought of the age on that subject. Apart from his Greek and Latin scholarship and his poems in those languages his English poems and other writings have a sweep and a depth which is very striking. His muse takes wing long before the reader even thinks of flying. He often creates an atmosphere that is almost ethereal. His "Savitri" is a literary marvel. The name and the basic story is borrowed from one of the most popular classical narratives in which Sanskrit abounds. A sustained web of allegory is woven round it, his own visions and inner experiences serving as the delicate warp and woof. None but such great

used the thinking mind as a means of arriving at spiritual realisation, spiritualising this mind itself at the same time Then followed an era of the development of philosophies and Yoga processes which more and more used the emotional and aesthetic being as the means of spiritual realisation and spiritualised the emotional level in man through the heart and feeling."

What I have said above regarding his originality and scholarship in connection with Vedic interpretation, applies equally to Aurobindo's writings on the Upanishads and the Gita. His observations on the Ramayana and Mahabharata, as well as on the works of some classical Sanskrit poets show his wide perspective and his capacity to capture the very soul of such huge epics which belonged to a different age.

As a literary critic, his tendency is highly constructive. Not that he could not wield a devastating pen. He did it on occasions, when for instance he denounced William Archer's criticism of Indian art. But that happened rarely His approach was always broad catholic, and synthetic His essays on "*The Future Poetry*" are monuments of his global sweep sympathetic understanding of the poetry of other countries cast in different languages.

Aurobindo's special contribution to the political life of the country when he actively participated in it, will ever remain a brilliant chapter in India's struggle for freedom. It was the politics of patriotism, the politics of a country fighting for its very life, in which he was called upon to play a noble part. There was hardly any scope for power-politics which normally vitiates the atmosphere and gives rise to jealousies and low intrigues It was all a matter of more and more selfless service greater and greater sacrifice and suffering without end. He based his politics not on economics or better government but on the fundamental right of every nation to have its own government. He raised nationalism to the pedestal of a religion and looked upon freedom as a means for the spiritual regeneration of this country

elemental desires and a healthy fear of the awesome happenings in the various natural phenomena, these and similar are the *raison d'etre* according to many Indologists of the full-throated outpourings of the Aryan patriarchs. But Aurobindo differs from them radically He does not merely say that the Vedic Mantras lend themselves to an esoteric meaning also, which perhaps was open only to the initiates. He states that to the eye of those inspired seers a body of truth was revealed which took the shape of virile poetry clothed in gorgeous imagery of nature herself It is not by courtesy or as only a byproduct that the psychological and spiritual meaning permeates some of the important Riks It is there by its own right and because the Rishis meant it. How else and in what context could Agni—Fire be called Jata veda (a knower)? How can the daily dawn in the east be said to help the Rishis in crossing over to the other shore of this darkness', for which they express their gratefulness? Aurobindo s thesis is in brief as follows —

In the age of Veda or in Egypt the spiritual achievement or the occult knowledge was confined to a few' it was not spread in the whole mass of humanity The mass of humanity evolves slowly containing in itself all stages of evolution from the material and the vital man to the mental man A small minority pushed beyond the barriers, opening the doors to occult and spiritual knowledge and preparing the ascent of the evolution beyond mental man into spiritual and supra mental being" and again,

"Here in India the reign of Intuition came first Intellectual mind developing afterwards in the later philosophy and science The Vedic age was followed by a great outburst of Intellect and philosophy which yet took spiritual truth as its basis and tried to reach it anew not through a direct Intuition or occult process as did the Vedic seers but by the power of the mind s reflective speculative logical thought at the same time processes of Yoga were developed which

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Lokamanya Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Mahatma Gandhi are to be designated journalists, certainly Sri Aurobindo was a journalist and a very powerful and efficient one at that. But I do not think that we should name these people as journalists simply because they wrote in journals or conducted them. They were far too much more than journalists: they were missioners of great ideals. Aurobindo had a mission of which he was always highly conscious. Newspapers were handy as vehicles of thought and he used them with marvellous effect. Truthful, clean, honest, inspired writing in the cause of freedom and the all-sided regeneration of India based on spiritual revitalisation, and latterly the divinization of mind, life and matter were the aims which were sacred to him and next to his heart. He endeavoured to fulfil these aims through newspapers, leaflets, booklets, books, letters, conversations, talks, speeches, contemplation, action, and invoking the Supermind. If, in the course of this herculean effort to carry out his high mission, he had to play a small part as a journalist and a publicist he did it as a master-hand. The impress that Sri Aurobindo has left by his work at the editor's table is worthy of becoming the highest ideal for journalists, but at the same time it is an ideal which can hardly and rarely be reached without a spiritual background.

Aurobindo would yield to none in his love of Indian culture. His appreciation and assessment of it is not that of a mere partisan. He values it more as representative of the human trend towards spirituality and inner development as different and distinct from that towards materiality and external achievement. His evaluation of the West was balanced. He stood for a broad synthesis of the two and strove hard to work out such a synthesis not only in the thought-world but also in a concrete society round himself. The East and the West are in fact, complementary. Romain Rolland, writing in 1924 invoked Asia saying, "Teach us to understand all things, Asia, teach us your knowledge of life! And learn of us action, achievement!"

India to him was the Mother, a goddess to be worshipped with the highest devotion and without any thought of self or gain. Aurobindo pictured the purest form of patriotism. One may as well call his a "Platonic patriotism". He was the first prominent and fearless advocate of unadulterated freedom without any control by the British. It was under his instructions that the journal *Yugantar* declared (for the first time in India) that it did not recognise the British Court and as a corollary, refused to defend itself. The same paper ventured to give instructions even in guerilla warfare to people who may be required to fight for freedom. Aurobindo's writings and speeches were highly inspired and raised the moral tone of the whole of the nationalist party. He laid greater stress on the building up of inner strength than on criticism of government and of other parties. Though he believed that an armed revolution—not mere terrorism—was a legitimate weapon to be used in a country's fight for freedom and though he maintained his contacts with revolutionary groups almost to the end of his stay in Bengal, he was convinced that an open broad-based agitation on the basis of securing complete national freedom was necessary. He incessantly worked along this line to the last day of his departure to Chandernagore. Ultimately he evolved in concrete terms the formula of nonviolent passive resistance. He aimed at the creation of a State within a State which would render the administration of the country by foreigners an impossibility. He visualized that if the resistance and revolt became general, the British would try to compromise and accommodate rather than lose all. His speeches were always simple, direct, incisive, inspiring and elevating; even today when read they are illuminating and illustrative of his originality of thought, fervour of patriotic feeling, and simple dignity of diction. They will repay reading at any time since they retain even now their freshness and flavour.

Sometimes people speak of Aurobindo as a great journalist. But we must remember that he was a *journalist of a kind*. If

of curbing anarchic force by legal force, nothing more than that. Without a revolutionary change in human nature real and intrinsic peace can never reign supreme in the world. What is required therefore is a spiritual evolution and a psychological revolution. It is only these that can form a stable basis for 'on earth peace good will toward men Without these inner changes, 'the pyramid may be made to stand on its apex, but it is only for a short while In his masterly writings "*The Human Cycle*" and "*The Ideal of Human Unity*" Aurobindo expresses his considered views as regards the human family and its future. He envisages the coming of superman based upon Supermind. This alone can ensure the continuous rule of truth and harmony and joy abounding

With these few words regarding his contribution, I now pass on to Sri Aurobindo's spiritual Sadhana, which I believe is the most important for all humanity

CHAPTER VIII

SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND

I HAVE taken the reader so far through some of the important biographical details of the remarkable life of Aurobindo Ghose. The rest of the book will be devoted to the main features of his unique Sadhana Siddhi, and teaching.

Sri Aurobindo's achievements in various fields of activity such as literature scholarship, journalism, politics, criticism of art and culture, and powerful advocacy of nationalism, are each of them monumental. Each by itself will live in history Each achievement would normally require a whole life-time of strenuous endeavour even on the part of a talented person. Each accomplishment would require a volume for full treatment and proper assessment. But these apart, far greater much more significant, and still more abiding are the contributions that he made in the

Mutual accusations by advocates of the cultures of East and West are not uncommon. William Archer, an art critic, once stumbled into the folly of unrestrained and unbridled vituperation against Indian art and culture He stigmatized India as uncivilized and barbarous. Sir John Woodroffe, Arthur Avalon of Tantra literature fame, came out with a rejoinder, *Is India Civilized?*' This was the occasion which provoked Aurobindo into bursting out in the famous sequence, "*A Defence of Indian Culture*' which appeared serially in "Arya The whole body of adverse criticism and condemnation of India and her culture stood before him when he took up his pen to defend it. India is once and again accused of escapism other worldliness, unrealism and weakness in action. Her religions are often characterized as a mass of superstition her philosophy as anaemic, her metaphysics as intellectual cobwebs her social system as a wilderness of taboos with regard to food and marriage. It may well be said that Aurobindo s defence is classical, his whole soul rises against the various charges. He first scores out the points of criticism and then builds up a superstructure which is essentially constructive. He marshals from the long and eventful history of India, the mighty figures who have contributed substantially *not only to India but to the world. And this contribution* ranges over every field of human activity and along some three thousand years of continued vigorous, and vital existence India he would emphasize along with writers like Will Durant, that she is contributing even today and now

With all this great and enthusiastic defence of India and her culture Aurobindo always looks at India in the perspective of the world of humanity and its progress. Peace harmony, joy are the cherished ideals of all. *But he does not believe that these* can be established by individual social or political action *however powerful and persistent* it might be. A kind of peace among nations might be enforced but it will be of the type that reigns within an organised State· such peace and order is the result

special mention or treatment. But that is not the case. As with the Sadhana of Sri Ramakrishna, Aurobindo's Sadhana also has some peculiar features about it. They need special study If a complete story could be made available, it would be a contribution to the history of spiritual Sadhana generally It is possible that peoples opinions may differ It is also possible that this brief study may commend itself to some and not to others. But the fact remains that there are special features which are worth noting and studying. It will be proper and more convenient to summarize the special features at the end. In the mean-while, let us try to appreciate and understand Indian spirituality and the meaning of spiritual Sadhana.

That India has been traditionally rich in spirituality is well-known. It is natural, therefore that her religion and culture should draw their inspiration from it. But what is significant is that all of India s activities, including political and economic, are sought to be based on a belief in the immanent existence of the trancendent Spirit. Her philosophy has never been an intellectual effort so much as a rationalisation of the intuitive spiritual experiences of her great souls. This has sometimes misled western writers into even saying that in the modern western sense India has no philosophy This opinion however is already yielding place to a real recognition of the important position that intuition holds in all philosophy

Since spirituality has been the real and operative under current in Indian life, it is but logical that the Indian renaissance, that burst on her in the latter half of the nineteenth century should have been essentially spiritual in nature. The long line of stalwarts who were pioneers in this renaissance were highly spiritual in their outlook and attitude towards life. From Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Aurobindo, every one of them had a predominantly spiritual background which showed itself prominently whatever the particular field in which each of them worked. Aurobindo once definitely declared "my province is spiritual

field of spiritual Sadhana, Siddhi and profound philosophy Like a great pioneer, and with the daring of an adventurous spirit, he has broken new ground. He has raised high hopes and shown to humanity the way to transcend itself and transform its future He has cleared the ground for fresh effort and inspired new faith. In this field especially Aurobindo excelled himself He worked as the spearhead of the human evolutionary urge and laid humanity under a permanent obligation to him.

India happens to be old and experienced in spirituality Her best minds have been those that delved into the depths of human consciousness in an attempt to reach the very end of the eternal quest. But even so Aurobindo has opened new horizons, "fresh spring the herald of love s mighty king by fixing far higher targets for us, other than the familiar ones of individual salvation merger in the Infinite detached action, and so on. It is proper *therefore to deal with the background of his huge effort* before going to the subject itself

While the significance of Aurobindo s Sadhana and Siddhi is high it is still extremely difficult to write fully or adequately about it since it has, as he himself remarked "not been on the surface for men to see It is comparatively easy to write his biography based on known facts but it is an extremely difficult task to venture to write about Aurobindo s Sadhana And yet an effort has to be made to this end since it is his Sadhana which is of the utmost importance interest and value to everybody There is now no possibility of his giving us an inner picture and history of his spiritual development What is written here is obviously inadequate and incomplete and might possibly be also *inaccurate in parts.* But with all that an attempt to study the spiritual endeavour of one of the most phenomenal minds of modern times has to be made.

If Sri Aurobindo s Sadhana had been carried on in the ordinary way and in the orthodox style we need not have given much attention to it Nor would it then have required any

of God" (in the mystical sense) as a possibility for every man born—all these ideas, which are philosophical or religious in the West, are part of the most intimate mind of the most ordinary Hindu. It has been proved to me that even illiterate persons in India know and adhere to the larger concepts which underline and inform all the luxuriant overgrowth of Hinduism, just as the village stone-mason engaged in making an effigy of Hanuman or Ganesh (the monkey god and the elephant-god) is well aware that these are aspects of the divine without being explicitly God."

Spirituality a general belief in the Supreme Spirit which pervades and is immanent everywhere and is the Sanatana source of all existence and is transcendent, is not peculiar only to India. What is specially peculiar is that it is more basic and far more common than elsewhere. It has been the basis of practically all religions in all regions of the world at all times. The expression and description of an existence of the spirit has, no doubt, differed to some extent in scriptures and religious writings. But it is evident even from such differences that the thing referred to and the experiences on which the descriptions are based is the same and is undoubtedly regarded as the Supreme Spirit. The human mind, from the very moment that it turned introspective or subjective and from the moment that it became speculative, has never been satisfied with considering the world of the senses to be self-explanatory and complete in itself. It has always felt that there is something subtler higher nobler purer and more powerful, at the root of all existence. This feeling is something like the "*Intimations of Immortality*" that the poet Wordsworth has so beautifully suggested in his great poem. This feeling may not be entirely rational but at the same time it cannot be called irrational and dismissed forthwith. It is there, persistent and recurrent, inspite of one's efforts to ignore or outgrow it.

This experience also points to the fact that there is another

truth Nothing mattered to him so much as spirituality

The fact of Indian spirituality is not something which i known only to Indians. Shrewd and well-known foreign writer and observers have often referred to this matter and endorse this fact. Some of them have not understood it fully and hav expressed some wonder at it, but all have recognised that ther is something very striking which is not to be found anywher else Lowes Dickinson, for instance in this connection has remarked that he came up against something utterly alien in India, which he did not find even in China or Japan.

In a letter written to Dilip K. Roy on 6th January 1932 about the highly spiritual connotation of words in Sanskrit and other Indian languages the great poet A.E. (George Russell) wrote "English is a great language, but it has very few words relating to spiritual ideas. I am sure the languages which the Hindus speak today must be richer in words fitted for spiritual expression than English in which there are few luminous words that can be used when there is a spiritual emotion to be expressed.

Vincent Sheean in his famous book on Mahatma Gandhi, "*Lead Kindly Light* makes the following observation when writing about spirituality and its awareness by the masses of India. What is distinctive in the broad mass of the Hindu people, as compared with all other great divisions of humanity is the unquestioning (and largely unthinking) acceptance of transcendental reality in the common consciousness. The Hindu is perhaps born co-conscious with his contemporaries it sometimes seems as if this may be so but whether it is or not he acquires the common consciousness with the growth of his mind and body so that long before he has learned to formulate his beliefs they are deep in him, ineradicable by subsequent surface processes such as the scientific knowledge taught in colleges. The universality of the spirit, the participation of each person in it, the transmigration of souls, the ultimate "realization

of bondage in the heart, and establish inner harmony

Another thing peculiar to India is an intense and all-absorbing urge to live a God-inspired life to live in the unitive experience of the highest Reality In the words of the philosopher Henrick Zimmer "the chief aim of Indian thought is to unveil and integrate into consciousness what has been resisted and hidden by the forces of life" This means that for the Indian mind, Spiritual Reality does not exist merely to be apprehended and experienced for a time and to be occasionally and ecstatically enjoyed but to be lived continuously in full awareness. To quote Zimmer again, "The supreme and characteristic achievement of the Brahmin mind (and this has been decisive, not only for the course of Indian Philosophy but also for the history of Indian civilization) was its discovery of the Self (Atman) as an independent imperishable entity underlying the conscious personality and bodily frame. Everything that we normally know and express about ourselves belongs to the sphere of change the sphere of time and space, but this Self (Atman) is forever changeless, beyond time, beyond space and the veiling net of causality beyond measure, beyond the dominion of the eye. The effort of Indian Philosophy has been for millenia to know this adamantine Self and make the knowledge effective in life. Through the vicissitudes of physical change, a spiritual footing is maintained in the peaceful-blissful ground of Atman: eternal, timeless, and imperishable Being" Thus to the Indian mind, the apprehension of Spiritual Reality is not a mere abstraction, neither is it only an inner experience, nor only an inspiration that occasionally thrills and sends one into a trance, but it is a truth of existence that drives us on to the ultimate target of our evolution, the divine life on earth.

There are some persons who misunderstand and misinterpret this stress on spirituality as pessimism, as other-worldliness, as unrealistic jargon, or something far removed from the needs and the demands of our daily life. These critics would have some

source of knowledge besides the senses and the faculty of reasoning which is as valid as any other This source is usually called "intuition", and knowledge through it is direct, vivid more compulsive and fills one's being and personality more completely than does any other kind of knowledge. It is derived more by direct identity of the whole of our consciousness with the object of knowledge than by any particular sense or senses or the mind trying to comprehend it.

In the course of its long search it is mostly through intuition that the human consciousness has come to realize the existence and immanence of the Supreme Spirit. Spirituality consists therefore, first and foremost in a firm belief in a Supreme Spirit. According to Aldous Huxley in his introduction to the *'Mahabharata Bhagavad Gita'* by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, one of the fundamental doctrines of what he calls Perennial Philosophy is that, "the phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness—the world of things and animals and men and even of gods—is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be non-existent." This observation very well explains the meaning and the essence of spirituality

While the Indian mind has in abundance this belief in the Spirit it is necessary also to note that the stress laid on this belief is so great that it seems to permeate almost every activity, secular as well as religious. In this respect, the Indian mind differs somewhat from others. Through the very long intense and continuous quest it has carried on, and even in the dim beginnings of thought, India was never satisfied with only an intellectual statement about the inner experience. She has never believed that thought, logic, learning, or intellect could be the gateway to spirituality All these may help in their own way but India has always believed that it is intuitive experience a direct apprehension of truth, that will lay at rest all doubt, cut the knot

dance of Shiva which manipulates the body of God numberlessly to the view' It leaves that pure existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be' Its sole and absolute object is the joy of dancing" To quote Zimmer again in this connection, he says, they (Hindu philosophers) study all that the occidental philosophers study "India that is to say has had, and still has, its own disciples of psychology ethics, physics, and metaphysical theory But the primary concern—in striking contrast to the interests of the modern philosophers of the West—has always been not information but transformation: a radical change of man s nature and therewith, a renovation of his understanding both of the outer world and of his own existence; a transformation as complete as possible, such as will amount when successful to a total conversion or rebirth" India has laid the greatest emphasis on the discovery and the assimilation of the Self, because ultimately everything that is and happens has a real and vital meaning only in terms of the Reality and our apprehension of it. The attempt has always been, even while one is intensely active, to hold oneself in a state of unmitigated and luminous awareness of the Reality Many ways and means and disciplines have been tried and prescribed for this great purpose. In their totality they are called Sadhana, spiritual discipline. They range from simple worship to highest ecstatic union and include sheer thinking, systematic self-analysis, breathcontrol, control of the modifications of the mind, dedication, inspired action and so on.

The Supreme Spirit, the Brahman, has been variously described in India as Satyam (Truth) Jnanam (Knowledge), Anantam (Infinity) and that which shines in the form of Joy Eternal (Anandarupam Amritam Yadvibhati) It is also described as Shantam (Peace) Shivam (Auspicious and Good) Advaitam (One-without-a-second) Prapanchopashamam (One in whom the Cosmos itself finds a resting place) It is characterized as Sat (Being) Chit (Consciousness) Ananda (Joy) Symbolically it is indicated by the syllable Aum pronounced as OM with O

substantial ground for saying so if the history of India had been a blank and its multisided civilization and culture for the last three thousand years had had no real existence. But it is quite the other way In no branch of human activity has India shown any indifference or so-called other worldliness or neglect It is true that she has produced comparatively more Rishis, more saints, more philosophers, and more religious-minded men. But that is no discredit. In addition she organised the earliest republics such as those of the Vijjins and the Lichhavis, built empires such as those of Chandragupta Asoka, Satyashraya Pulakeshi, Vikramaditya Harshavardhana, Vijayanagar and Shivaji. India's Sciences and arts, industries and commerce till about the eighteenth century were the envy of the world She sent out religious missions to far off lands and conveyed the message of peace and culture without any political motive or support. She produced by the score great politicians, statesmen, and administrators. She built temples and other structures some of which confound even modern engineers Her architecture and sculpture her painting and other arts, her music and histrionic talents have such baffling variety and wide range that it requires decades to study them. Her literature, first in Sanskrit and then in Prakrit, Pali and the regional languages, is rich and varied in every sense of the word No epic can stand comparison with the mighty *Mahabharata* If these things are the measure of her other worldliness, then we are not ashamed of it, nor of the worldly achievements that flowed therefrom. But in fact the world life and matter have never been shunned or neglected by the Indian mind except in the sense of emphasising that there is "something beyond all these which includes and comprehends them. "This is not all, this is not the end is the refrain. This is the means rather' This is the thin yet alluring veil that screens the still more beautiful face of the spirit beyond. The Upanishad in another context says "a golden lid covers the very face of Truth. To us all, 'becoming', the whole world-process is the ecstatic

of the spiritual experience will always depend on the value one attaches to the endeavour and its success. All spiritual thinkers and mystics have emphasised that it is the highest endeavour a man can and ought to put forth, because it is the highest state of being that one can ever achieve. In the case of India, this experience of identification of the individual self with the Supreme Spirit and the unitive life lived in that experience is looked upon as the final goal of all spiritual endeavour. In fact, it is in this direction that the evolution of the human consciousness is believed to be going. One begins with individual self-consciousness but the ever expanding concentric circles that one draws as one evolves further and further leads to the universal consciousness where the individual dwindles merely to a point of reference, without a circumference of its own. The whole of the universe then becomes the circumference. It has been proved time after time by great souls throughout the ages and in many lands, that it is possible for individuals to reach such a stage of consciousness and to live in the richness and plenitude of that unitive experience of the Supreme Spirit. India has produced such Mahatmas (great souls) again and again to prove that it can be done. Ramana Maharshi, so widely known recently had attained this state of being. India has honoured and worshipped such men and women through generations. The Indian mind has awe for great kings and administrators, admiration for discoverers and inventors, deep affection for artists and poets but has profound reverence and veneration for its saints and seers, for its sages and Rishis. India knows that it is they who are the vanguard of inner evolution. Others do help but it is they who bear the burden of leading and directing and guiding the groping human mind from the "unreal to the real" It is they who are ever alert and bear the brunt of battle for the spiritual progress of humanity

It has already been stated that spirituality and all that it connotes is more or less familiar to all people wherever an inner

long At times, it is described also as Ananda (Pure Bliss or Pure Joy) The Upanishad poses a question, "If the Void (Akasha) were not full of joy or Bliss, who could have breathed and lived?" It further asserts that, "It is from Ananda that all beings issue forth, in Ananda it is that they live and have their existence, towards Ananda do they all proceed and into Ananda they ultimately merge.' It is in this symbolic sense that the eternal joy intoxicated Dance of Shiva goes on with the cycle of creation, existence and destruction following each other, in infinite and ever varying succession.

This Divine Ground is not entirely foreign or quite strange to other religions and other thinkers. It might be that the description differs or that characterization varies in certain details. But the basic conception is familiar to all the religious-minded, the mystics, and the seers in different lands. Eckhart and Ruysbroeck would call it the Abyss of Godhead. Some would call it Gnosis, other Al Haqq, and so on.

What is important however, from the point of view of human evolution and endeavour is not merely intellectual knowledge and recognition of the existence of Reality as described above, but belief with one's whole being that it does exist and what is more that it is possible for human consciousness to reach it and possess it. If one does not believe in the possibility of unitive experience of the Godhead or the Divine Ground it remains a mere concept, an idea without the least influence on the life and the inner being of the aspirant concerned. It is of the utmost significance, therefore, that together with belief in Reality, one must also have belief in the possibility and in one's capacity to reach the Reality by the methods prescribed for so doing Then alone will the attempt be possible and one day the summit of consciousness be reached.

It is possible to know and believe in the existence of the Reality and concede also the possibility of unitive experience of it. But the progress of one's effort as well as the completeness

lies beyond our self-consciousness and we are not directly in touch with it. But our sub-consciousness as well as self-consciousness float on it as thin layers on the surface of a mighty ocean. It is impersonal while our self-consciousness is extremely personal; our sub-consciousness also reflects something of our personal existence. The aim and attempt of the spiritual aspirant or the Sadhak in India has always been to transcend the aura of self-consciousness, to control the sub-conscious and identify himself with the vast and all-inclusive Unconscious which is the Spirit itself. This he has sought to do by self-control, self-purification, concentration, heightening the power of the self-conscious, contemplation and finally dedication and complete identification with the Spirit. The whole of this attempt in the aggregate is called spiritual Sadhana. The consummation is called Siddhi or fulfilment. Thus the Sadhak starts as a novice, goes through the Sadhana, that is spiritual discipline, and attains Siddhi. The Siddha who is the "accomplished one" is no longer imprisoned within the coils and meshes of his individual passions and prejudices; he is in a position to control the storms that sweep over his consciousness from the sub-conscious regions, and being firmly implanted in the Unconscious, enjoys in the depth of his being the infinite calm and the ineffable bliss that is characteristic of the Spirit.

The Spirit, the Being that is immanent and at the same time transcendent manifests itself in numberless forms and in infinite variety. The human being is one such form and the latest in the scale of evolution on this planet. In two different places, the Upanishads have tried at some length to analyse the way consciousness works in the human mind. It is interesting to study these accounts; they are very useful from the practical point of view.

Within the human individual, there are five planes or dimensions or sheaths of consciousness which are interpenetrating and each of which is progressively subtler and higher than

search has been conducted on any scale. It is a reality higher than the one with which we are ordinarily in contact, namely, the reality of the world of senses. In the course of evolution of human consciousness, man has discovered some long-hidden truths. When once he apprehends the higher truth, he makes it his own and is able to probe further into the mysteries that surround him. It may be said with some justification that, so far, man has generally addressed himself more to the world of senses to the material world than to the inner world of his own consciousness. In fact, modern research into the working of the human mind is very recent, and is still in its infancy. It might indeed eventuate that it is in this realm that the unknown secrets even of the world of senses lie. Man is so far only at the threshold of that far subtler world which is so much with him and yet with which he is so unfamiliar. It is in some important respects in this domain that India has certainly anticipated other cultures.

Spirituality or the spiritual world is not something external but is rather within our own consciousness, we are within it like specks in a vast and limitless firmament. We have however, to seek it in our consciousness and find it in all its glory. Modern psychology has been trying recently to probe into the mysteries of consciousness, and has found that the sector in which self-consciousness works is very small compared with the vast and unfathomable subconscious and unconscious areas. The field of the unconscious is practically limitless and beyond the ken of the self-conscious, while the sub-conscious is the area which is immediately in touch with the self-conscious. The subconscious represents the vast store of all that we have ever thought of or experienced. It is also that layer of our consciousness where lie in wait our instincts and our elemental urges, not only the individual ones but the universal ones also. The vast unconscious is really not unconscious except in the sense that we, as self-conscious individuals, are not now aware of it. It

which is described as peaceful, good, and the very abode of rest, reigns supreme. The Sadhak's attempt always is to reach that state of consciousness. He is then the master of the forces that otherwise rule his consciousness. Mastery of the inner world of consciousness being the highest aim of the spiritual aspirant, he feels gratified only when he attains the Turiya state.

Through the long course of his history man has sought mainly to establish control and mastery over the forces of nature outside himself, and has not worked as hard to have control over the powers of consciousness within his own being. This division of forces as inner and outer is not very logical because both act and react and interpenetrate each other with such amazing complexity that logically and scientifically it is wrong even to say that they are two different forces. And yet for practical purposes, it is convenient to recognize a difference. It is then easier for us to deal with them. The Indian mind has given priority to the establishment of an empire (Swarajya) within, but without neglecting the other field, that is, the outside world. The attempts to conquer the outer world can be designated as Adhibhoutik (worldy) Sadhana, and those to conquer the inner world as Adhyatmik Sadhana, or spiritual endeavour. It must, however be remembered that the Indian mind has not been satisfied by merely demarcating the two and giving greater importance to the latter. It has attempted, and succeeded to a great extent, in co-ordinating and synthesising the two. In the attempt of synthesis, it has given to each one [illegible]e and created a harmony and an integration which is [illegible]e in the history of human thought and action.

[illegible]n Ishavasya, one of the earliest Upanishad, the synthesis is [illegible]y explained. We read, "Those who follow exclusively the path of ignorance, i.e., the path of the material world and of these senses, go to the world of darkness; a still darker world awaits those that follow exclusively the metaphysical world, i.e., the world of abstractions. Different are the destinations

the one preceding it: Annamaya Kosh (matter), Pranamaya Kosh (vital force), Manomaya Kosh (mind-stuff), Vijnanamaya Kosh (pure mind) and Anandamaya Kosh (bliss) The human consciousness can normally move among all these planes. Evolution and effort help the soul to ascend the ladder and occupy the highest plane. It may be compared with a person who resides in a five-storied house. It is for him to decide on which floor to live. All the storeys have their own attraction and respective attachments. The Upanishad points out that he who is learned in the Vedas and at the same time is without attachment transcends all these planes even the Anandamaya Kosh, it asserts The meaning is that a Siddha is not attached even to the highest as detachment itself is the greatest attribute of such a status. One who has attained the spiritually highest stage of consciousness continues to have his body, his mind, his personality and all that constitutes a person. But his consciousness is rooted in the Bliss of the Spirit and is not held captive by the various planes of existence within his personality He is as free as a bird in the sky and roams about as a denizen of all the planes without attachment to any one of them. His is the life of a free soul living in unitive experience of the highest consciousness.

The Upanishad has described in another way the world of consciousness in man It has mentioned four states of consciousness: the Jagrat (waking consciousness), the Swapna (dream-consciousness) the Sushupti (the sleep-consciousness), and the Turiya (the fourth i.e. one beyond all these) This seems to be a far simpler classification. The first three states are familiar to every one of us. Self-consciousness is most active and prominent in the Jagrat state. The sub-conscious might be said to rule the dream-world without the impediment of the controlling power of self-consciousness. During sleep, however, both are quiescent. They are held in suspense. They are neither active nor inactive. In the Turiya stage, an infinite calm,

without-the-second. In the Ashtanga-yoga of Patanjali, Samadhi is mentioned as the eighth and final stage. It is that which every Sadhak aims at reaching in the course of his Sadhana. It is an ecstatic condition, quite indescribable, in which the whole being of the Sadhak is merged in the object of contemplation. It is not necessary to discuss here the varieties of Samadhi and their characteristics.

Before I begin to write about Aurobindo's Sadhana, it is relevant to investigate how and why an individual is drawn to spiritual life. We do find that to this life some are more attracted than others. We also find that sometimes certain incidents or experiences in the course of one's life are the cause of an inner conversion. It is very difficult however to generalise in this matter as there seems to be no uniformity in the reasons that lead a person or persons towards spirituality. Sometimes it might be natural tendency, at others an unforgettable experience. It might be one of many causes which give a spiritual turn to one's life. But generally speaking, introverts are more subject to it than are extraverts. The Katha Upanishad says that because the Self-Existent Spirit went forth and created the universe, humanity tends to look outward, being engrossed usually with the outside world and fails to look into the inner being. Very few persons, it adds, probe into the inner consciousness and try to find the Supreme Self.

The usual reasons, however, why a person turns towards spiritual life are subjective more than objective. The inner conversion does not depend so much upon things happening in a particular way as upon the approach and attitude of persons towards incidents or events or experiences. It is often some kind of a shock to one's individuality that makes a person conscious of his own limitations and of the existence of a power besides and beyond himself of which he has to take count. Three kinds of intense agony designated as Trividha Tapa (physical, mental, and that which concerns the personality) are sometimes

of the path of the senses and of the path of abstractions: so have we heard from the thinkers of old who told us. But those who know by synthesis that which is beyond both namely, the Ground where they are reconciled conquer the world by following the path of the senses and attain immortality by following the path of abstract knowledge Thus the Isha Upanishad avers that there is a Reality in which the seeming antithesis between the outer and the inner world finds a perfect synthesis. The aspirant who possesses the knowledge of that synthesis is in a position to keep his balance and to take the fullest advantage of both the paths. He acts integrally and in full knowledge.

We have seen that India has looked upon spiritual truth as the highest truth The evolutionary urge of the human consciousness and its general direction is towards realising that Truth of truths. For centuries upon centuries the Indian mind has also thought that living in the intuitive experience of Truth is the highest kind of life This being so India has for centuries experimented on scientific lines with the human consciousness and its inner powers and capacity and is now in possession of well directed paths and systems of spiritual Sadhana. The result has been that India's contribution to spiritual discipline and her technique of Yoga is so varied so systematic and so perfect that there is hardly any system of spiritual culture in the world which is not familiar to her in one form or another *One still discovers individuals or groups of aspirants in India* practising the various methods of Yoga which proves that none of these systems is in any sense obsolete They have their own founders, Rishis, their traditions, their Gurus, their technique and their followers. There is one underlying unity however in all these systems and that is the unity of aim All believe that these various roads lead to Ananda that blissful state of consciousness where "peace that never was on sea or land where the individual consciousness is merged in the universal in the One-

necessary for fully understanding Aurobindo's Sadhana. What has been said is neither exhaustive nor complete in detail. It only indicates the course which spirituality and spiritual discipline have run so far especially in India. But as we have said the science and art of Sadhana is all along evolving with life itself. One must not be surprised therefore to find new trends and fresh departures. There are probably some who consider that the seal is set and one has but to follow what the ancients have said and that there is nothing more or new to be added. This point of view can be logically true only of dead things, not of living ones. No science or art that is alive can utter such a dogma. In fact, it would be fatal for any living science and any creative art to think so. Since spirit is eternal, spirituality is eternal. Since the quest after the spirit by man is eternal, Sadhana too is ever evolving. As man advances, his vision widens, his insight deepens, his search becomes more intense. He is bound to add to the variety of methods by which he has hitherto approached and sought Reality.

It is necessary to make this observation because Aurobindo himself never believed in mere repetitive revival or mechanical imitation of old things. He valued the old specially the rich and ancient Indian spiritual heritage. But at the same time, he was very careful to emphasize that the best in what is old must be revitalized and used in the form in which it can now fit in, so that it may integrate itself with the outrushing current of our progressive and evolving culture. In fact, Aurobindo was never a slave to orthodoxy and to superstition. The whole history of his spirituality his Sadhana, his Siddhi, and his teaching though rooted in ancient wisdom, is one long and interesting narrative of something original, much that is full of individuality and enough that is entirely fresh and additional.

supposed to arouse and awaken the self-consciousness of man and make him realize his insignificance as an individual. These shatter his egoism and make him feel the existence of "a reality" other than himself. Man's consciousness of his own limitations and his awareness of the existence of a Higher Power are the fundamentals necessary to a spiritual life.

Apart from the causes which lead persons to adopt a spiritual attitude towards life there are three things that are bound to lead humanity, sooner or later, to the kind of life that is called spiritual. Humanity is definitely on the march in the inner world of consciousness. Natural evolution, which has been responsible for bringing man to this stage from that of the ape-man continues. It now points more than ever to the development not so much of the physical body as of the inner consciousness. The more the human consciousness develops the more it is bound to incline towards the subtler life of the spirit. The second tendency observable is the quest of the inner truth which is becoming more and more insistent in humanity. This quest is now not satisfied with the truth of the outer world alone. It is insistent upon knowing the sub-conscious and the unconscious and is ambitious of establishing its control and mastery over them. This tendency also points progressively towards a life more of the spirit than of the senses. The third tendency inherent in human consciousness is one which seeks peace and pure joy through all its activities. This usually leads one from one physical joy to another. But such joy is not unmixed nor constant. That leads to a hunger for eternal joy. Ultimately the human mind is bound to seek that poise of the spirit which alone ensures ineffable and continuous joy. Thus evolutionary forces are gradually but certainly leading humanity towards a kind of life which is nearer spirituality than materiality. The direction is definite though the speed is far more indeterminate and uncertain than one would like it to be.

This brief background regarding spirituality and Sadhana is

He required some time for the study of Indian lore. Soon enough, after coming to India, the influence of the Indian environment gave shape to his spiritual instinct. "We must free India", "We must sacrifice everything for her sake" were categorical imperatives with him for a long time. His efforts to build his personality were for India, his attempt to acquire more moral and mental power was for her sake and in the beginning it was for her that he practised Yoga. To him India had already become "a spiritual being" and he fought for her freedom, not only to secure political and economic benefit but also for her complete spiritual regeneration, so that her full message could be delivered to the world. His study of the lives and teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda seems to have been responsible for decisive action in this matter. Thus, parallel with the dominant note of patriotism and sacrifice for Mother India, there developed within him an intense love of spirituality and spiritual truth for which India stood. Gradually he came to believe that there was great substance in the way pointed out by the Gita and the Upanishads and that the pursuit of it would lead him to the spiritual experience which would ultimately enthrone his soul on the firmest and truest of foundations.

Long before he was actually called upon to practise regular Sadhana, Aurobindo had some spiritual experiences. This shows that he was never a stranger to the realm which he was later to enter and where, by his inborn tendencies and Herculean efforts, he was to establish an empire. It is recorded that when he returned to India in February 1893 and landed at Apollo Bunder Bombay he felt as if a vast calm descended upon him—a calm which was to surround and remain with him for some months afterwards.

One cannot say whether his Bombay experience was the very first of his spiritual experiences, but it is certainly one that is known to the world. Similar early experiences, in their respective careers, have been recorded in the case of many Sadhaks

CHAPTER IX

SADHANA—FACE TO FACE WITH GOD

WE are usually moulded by the compelling influence of early environment, so much so that great effort is required to counter that influence. The way of life and the mode of thought adopted early in life mostly determines the later part of it. Aurobindo however defied both environment and education and achieved something on his own frustrating his father's plans. Almost at the end of his educational career something incalculable happened to him. His inner urge went counter to the western and highly modern and materialistic education which had been given him from his fifth year. This religious urge changed the brilliant, highly intellectual and prosperous worldly gentleman into a blazing spiritual and contemplative Sadhak who after a hard inner struggle triumphantly achieved and enjoyed an infinite calm, and gave to the world a new philosophy. It is not easy to conceive how Sri Aurobindo who was almost a stranger to India and to Indian culture up to the age of twenty-one could have eventually taken to the Indian way of spiritual discipline. It would not have been so strange if he had become a Christian or if he had adopted the Brahmo form of worship. But he followed, for a great length of time, almost the orthodox type of Sadhana. Before dealing with his Sadhana however it will be interesting to note how he came to take to the path of spirituality at all.

It has already been mentioned that from his thirteenth year he had had a strong urge to fight selfishness and to sacrifice for others. It has also been noted that he was a contemplative and had mystic traits in him. The first signs however of intense feeling and aspiration are to be found in his poetic endeavours. His early poems embody the outpourings of a potentially rich and majestic heart. His expression of patriotism and devotion to the motherland reveals his deeply emotional and religious nature.

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and Siddhas. Their usefulness is undoubted and their value to the person concerned inestimable. Such an experience, even a single and detached one, is always cherished and remembered as a pointer It reassures an aspirant and helps to create self-confidence. It is a clear indication of present possibilities and it denotes a future promise. But it is of course necessary that such an experience should have occurred in the waking state and should be vivid, intense, and sufficiently deep It should not be vague, confused, dreamy, or hallucinatory

It might not be out of place here to mention Aurobindo's curiosity about auto-writing by the planchette While in Baroda in 1901 his departed father Krishnadhan Ghose had once been invoked. A question about Bal Gangadhar Tilak was asked and a reply came that he would fight to the end, and would keep his head high when others would bend! To a further question about his own future activities, the reply was "build the temple It should be noted that Aurobindo was at that time thinking of writing "*Bhawani Mandir* (Temple of Bhawani) pamphlet.

It is interesting to note that experiences similar to those which Aurobindo had immediately on landing in India, have been recorded in connection with some great souls, early in their lives. One should be careful however to avoid comparisons because times as well as circumstances differ in each case. Gautama Siddhartha, the Buddha, when very young and while wandering about in the gardens of his father, sometimes experienced a kind of causeless unearthly happiness whenever he sat under a certain Amalaki tree. Later after practising severe and nerve-testing austerities, when Gautama approached Alarkalam the Yogi, for advice he recalled that happy experience and asked the Yogi if it could be repeated and restored to him. Gadadhar (Paramahansa Ramakrishna), *when wandering in a field while aged only* eight or so went into a deep trance. It occurred as he saw a line of beautiful white cranes wending its way against the background of darkblue clouds in the sky He remembered the experience

for a long time and could recall it vividly. On another occasion he went into a trance as he danced while playing the role of Shiva. As a young student, Narendra, (the well-known Vivekananda) almost every day had the vision of a bright flame which he seemed to enter as he closed his eyes and went to sleep. Kavi Rabindra Nath Tagore, the Poet of Asia, about the age of seventeen, suddenly saw one day the whole world bathed in a charming light. The vision haunted him for a long time. Numerous instances such as these can be quoted from the lives of mystics, both Eastern and Western, ancient and modern. It is sufficient here however to say that such experiences play a very useful role in the spiritual life of aspirants.

Other experiences of a spiritual nature are recorded in the case of Aurobindo. Once while walking on the ridge of the Shankaracharya Hill (also called Takht-e-Soleman) in Srinagar Kashmir he had a glimpse of the Vacant Infinite enveloping and absorbing everything else. It was as it were, the vivid experience of the Illimitable Void (Akasha) to the exclusion of every thing else. This experience has been very eloquently described by him in his sonnet "*Adwaita*" appearing in "*Last Poems*" He says:—

" Around me was a formless solitude:
All had become one strange Unnameable
Topless and fathomless, forever still,"

On another occasion, when visiting Swami Sadguru Brahmananda at Chandod, Aurobindo went to the shrine of Kali on the banks of the Narmada. There he felt he saw the Mother Kali, "a living presence deathless and divine," which awakened faith in image worship. There was another occasion in the early years of his stay in Baroda. He was faced with a situation when his "carriage-and-four" was about to be wrecked in an accident. It was a critical moment and suddenly he experienced the vision of the Godhead surging up from within ("in me, enveloping me the body of Him") and saving the situation.

These experiences show clearly that Aurobindo's mind was amenable to them. It should be noted however, that these have nothing to do with occultism or with hallucinatory phenomena. The latter happen in the course and context of certain other circumstances which are almost pathological. Occultism concerns itself with phenomena far lower than those on the spiritual plane Aurobindo's experiences came without any effort on his part and in such an unexpected manner that they were always a surprise to him Moreover they came long before he began to perform any regular spiritual exercise. It is strange, but true that Aurobindo did not attach much importance to them at that time nor was he immediately drawn to Sadhana. He was then burning with an intense desire to serve his country and was busy with deep studies. He was however, yearning all the time for greater power with which to liberate India. That power was spiritual power Brahmatej which he ultimately acquired

Aurobindo's ultimate turn towards spirituality and Yoga can be traced to his growing conviction that that was the real path to Brahmatej and to perfection He saw no good in a slavish imitation by India of the way of the West and the famous couplet of the Gita regarding following *one's own Swadharma one's own inner law of being rather than that of others* deeply impressed him. That was the secret of his adopting the Indian way of life. *His studies confirmed his growing conviction that there* was something deeper nobler subtler *more powerful* and vital in Sanatana *Dharma* than was seen and appreciated by the average, practical English-educated person So the decision was made and he gradually turned to Yoga *the most generic term* used for that system of spiritual culture and discipline which ultimately leads to the shattering of the shell of the individual ego to self transcendence in the supermost degree and to the ultimate realization of the immanent Spirit and unitive life in it.

In the beginning, this decision took shape as a two-fold movement in Sri Aurobindo's life: one was a powerful urge to free India from foreign domination and to rehabilitate her spiritually and culturally: the second was his intense personal aspiration to reach the highest goal in spirituality. As he proceeded, the former urge led him, for however brief a period, to the special and marvellous role he played in politics and the latter ultimately took him to Pondicherry and spiritually supramental regions. In both cases, however, the dominant note at all times was spirituality. Not only did he carry on Sadhana while he was busy with politics, but his whole political career can be characterised as a part of his intense spiritual Sadhana, especially the Karmayoga phase of it. Outwardly he was intensely busy with politics from 1906 to 1910, but inwardly he was poised and he operated as an instrument of the Divine. Everything that he did and spoke and wrote was on a high spiritual level. This is obvious from the way he conducted his politics and his journals and from his example of dedication to Mother India which he placed before the younger generation. His whole political career especially the year spent in Alipore jail, helped him to attain his spiritual goal.

Aurobindo brought to his Sadhana some exceptionally high and rare qualifications, seldom seen together in a single personality. His sincerity was absolute and he lived a life of effortless simplicity. He was shy by nature and shunned all limelight and publicity. His reserve saved him from meaningless social rounds. He had the gift of detachment which was almost natural to him. He was highly intelligent. His power of concentration was tremendous. The Mundaka Upanishad gives the analogy of the arrow which gets fixed in the target like the mind of the contemplative in the object of devotion. His intellectual capacity also was prodigious. He was a voracious reader and could discuss in depth any subject. His literary gift was extraordinary as is proved by his voluminous writings as well as the very high

quality of most of them. He was rich in emotion and in imagination, which gave added strength and a rare poetical quality to his literary production. Above all, he was self-confident and knew that he had a mission in life His spiritual experiences added to his self-confidence and confirmed him in his inclination to follow the chosen path.

There is not much autobiographical material available covering this phase of Aurobindo s life yet to the general reader and to Sadhaks of all ages and climes this was a very important and practical part of it. Although heights that he reached are there for all to see and admire they will be the despair of most, if we are unable to discover how they were reached and by what effort. It is another matter that very few would have the daring and the capacity to attempt the path even when fully known. But if only the process is known there can be a certain intellectual satisfaction. Moreover Sadhaks could take hints if they knew and understood the process in detail

From stray hints dropped casually here and there by Aurobindo as well as from other sources, one can have a fair idea of the general direction of his Sadhana the different stages through which he passed the modifications he adopted from time to time the high water mark he reached the special features of his system and finally the extremely trying as well as sometimes intensely agonising phases that he went through Aurobindo warns against complacency all those who are under the impression that Sadhana is a smooth-sailing affair It is an adventure of the highest order and an experiment with one s whole soul and being Especially was it so in his case as he broke quite new ground and launched himself on uncharted seas and trod through pathless woods without the aid of a Guru as such. Normally when one follows a spiritual path one has to bid good-bye to all physical comforts and to go through mental and moral conflicts which can only be described by the word "excruciating And yet the path has its own charms and attraction The final prize

of an abiding peace and a harmonious and integrated personality is inviting beyond measure.

Before proceeding with Aurobindo's Sadhana, it would perhaps be helpful to quote a passage from the published booklet, "*Sri Aurobindo and his Ashram*" On page 46, a quotation appears from one of his letters which purports to say something of his practice of Yoga. It says: "I began my Yoga in 1904 without a Guru, in 1908 I received important help from a Maharashtrian yogi and discovered the foundations of my Sadhana, but from that time till the Mother (Mira Richard) came to India I received no spiritual help from anyone else. My Sadhana before and afterwards was not founded upon books but upon personal experiences that crowded on me from within. But in the jail, I had the Gita and the Upanishads with me. I practised the yoga of the Gita and meditated with the help of the Upanishads. These were the only books from which I found guidance; the Veda which I first began to read long afterwards in Pondicherry rather confirmed what experiences I already had, than was any guide to my Sadhana. I sometimes turned to the Gita for light when there was a question or a difficulty and usually received help or an answer from it. It is a fact that I was hearing constantly the voice of Vivekananda speaking to me for a fortnight in the jail in my solitary meditation and I felt his presence. The voice spoke only on a special and limited but very important field of spiritual experience and it ceased as soon as it had finished saying all that it had to say on that subject."

This is but a glimpse into his practice. But it serves as a good introduction since it is from his own pen. As already indicated, once the decision was made, Aurobindo plunged into Sadhana with a single-mindedness and intensity of purpose which were characteristic of him in everything that he said and did. Normally speaking, a Guru is always indicated in the matter of spiritual Sadhana. He usually initiates and guides the disciple from stage to stage. It is said that, especially in the matter of

Yoga, one should not venture into the path without a Guru, as a novice is likely to commit mistakes which may lead to permanent injury to body and mind. There are a number of instances where unguided as well as misguided enthusiasts have lost their way and floundered. We find, therefore, that in most cases, Yogis have Gurus. Moreover the Guru is traditionally given a very high place, as he transmits by personal effort and contact what books and intellectual study cannot impart. Some schools of thought assert that the Guru is superior to the father himself, as he gives spiritual birth to the disciple, and some others, that he is himself Brahman, since it is he who is instrumental in leading the disciple to the Godhead. In most of the Upanishads, the transmission of Brahmavidya to the disciples is by a Guru after a long stay with him and after repeated questioning. The Taittiriya Upanishad exhorts the student to look upon the Acharya (the preceptor) as God. All this goes to prove the extreme importance of a Guru.

It is not, however always the disciple who seeks the Guru. There are instances where the Guru has come to the disciple who was waiting for him. A real Siddha or Guru is always anxious to find a good disciple, to transmit his Vidya to him which otherwise would be lost. Ramakrishna is said to have complained that no good Shishyas (disciples) were available. In the case of Aurobindo it was not that he was averse to a Guru. As is evident, he did take some guidance from people who were capable of helping him. But we can say that he had no Guru in the usual sense of the term. The following from Anilbaran Roy's Journal (1926) in connection with Aurobindo's Sadhana is revealing: "Sri Aurobindo: 'Though generally a touch from the Guru is necessary it is not indispensable. In my case there was no touch from a Guru—I got an inner touch and practised Yoga. At a certain stage, when I could not proceed any further Lele gave me some help. When I came to Pondicherry I got from within a programme for my Sadhana. I carried it out for myself, but

could not make much progress regarding the help to be given to others; then came Mira—I found with her and the method of this help. When the urge first came, Aurobindo took some preliminary instruction in Pranayam from one Devdhar an engineer in Baroda, who was a disciple of Swami Brahmananda of Chandod. That instruction sufficed and he started on his career of regular Yoga Sadhana at the beginning of 1904 At that time there was a notion generally prevalent that Pranayam is indispensable for Yoga, which is really not the case. There can be Yoga without Pranayam, though it is true that the latter is of great help if one can devote some time to it.

It is instructive to see what Aurobindo has to say about Pranayam. "It is my experience" he says, "that Pranayam makes one's intellect sharper and one's brain quicker When I was doing it in Baroda, I was practising it for about five to six hours per day three hours in the morning and two or three hours in the evening I felt that there was a great accession of light and power in the mind. I used to write poetry in those days. Earlier I could sometimes write only about 200 lines a month. After I began practising Pranayam I could write 200 lines in half an hour My memory was rather dull before. But afterwards, I composed whenever I had inspiration and remembered *ad seriatim* the whole till I committed it to paper at leisure. I felt as if my brain was encircled by a ring of electricity", (p. 235 "Dakshina" Feb. 1951). In another place, in connection with Pranayam and spiritual results, he says " struggled for five years without any the least spiritual result but poetry came like a river and prose like a flood and other things too that were mental, vital, psychical, not spiritual richness or openings. " After some years he dropped Pranayam but that did not mean the end of his Yoga or Sadhana. But, for any Yoga or Sadhana, it is necessary to have concentration, continuity and steadiness of faith and purpose, and contemplation (Dhyan).

We should distinguish between spiritual Sadhana, Pranayam

and other practices which may be included in Sadhana. The form of the earlier Sadhana of Aurobindo has to be only inferred, it probably comprised intense thinking heart-searching, and contemplation. It was for further intensification of this Sadhana and expediting the consummation that Aurobindo took to Yoga, the Ashtanga Yoga which includes Pranayam and seven other steps.

In the course of his writings Aurobindo once remarked that "all life is Yoga". In his case, it was literally so. From the very beginning of his awareness of a higher spiritual life and the consciousness of his great mission, he led the life of a practising Yogi without any leisure or lapse or slackening.

In fact, the whole of involution and evolution in the universe is one continuous Yoga of the Supreme Spirit. It is in this sense that Shri Krishna as Yogeshwar (the Master of Yoga) designates the power of creation of the Lord as "Yoga-maya". The individual is carried along this eternal stream of Yoga unconsciously till he becomes aware of it. As soon as he is aware of it and of the extent of his part in it he is called upon to play his role consciously and expedite matters. He then partakes consciously in the creative Yoga and the joy of co-operation and of being in tune with the Infinite is his. Thus Yoga is not an individual affair, though the part one plays might for a time be considered to be very intimate and important by the person concerned. Aurobindo's Sadhana gradually began to help him in his spiritual progress. It progressively developed into Yoga for humanity and ultimately identified itself with universal Yoga. It became a conscious participation in the mighty upward evolution and ascent towards the Divine. His special endeavour however was for Divine descent into mind, life and matter in order to raise them all to divine heights.

It is obvious then that in the history of Aurobindo's Sadhana, Yoga has a special place and significance. It evolved with the unique spiritual progress which he envisaged and stressed. It

also assumed new importance. It gathered fresher and deeper connotation and finally it came to be what is described as Integral Yoga. The evolution of the meaning of the word Yoga in Aurobindo's life was similar to the expanding and deepening significance of the word Ahimsa in Mahatma Gandhi's life or that of the important word "Yajna" in the Gita. But before that matter is discussed, it is necessary to understand briefly the meaning of Yoga according to common interpretation and also according to Yogi Patanjali, the author of Yoga Sutras.

The word "Yoga" is from the Sanskrit root "Yuj" to join, to become one with, to be united. "Yoga" is the act of joining, act of becoming one, the act of being united. It also means the method or technique that leads to the union of the soul with the Oversoul or the Universal Self. It is also interpreted as concentration, communion. Probably "communion" in the sense of spiritual intercourse, more adequately conveys the meaning of Yoga than any other word. This English word "communion" has to a great extent a connotation which is invariably attached to Yoga.

Some scholars are of the opinion that Yoga, together with the cult of Shiva was a characteristic of the religious life of the pre-Aryan inhabitants of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, i.e., the region of modern Sind and Southern Punjab. They say that Yoga as a religio-mystic ideology and practice can be traced to the Agamic source but actually not to the Nigamas (the Vedas) That is why they observe, there is no caste or sex restriction in teaching or learning Yoga. But, since the script of those days is yet undeciphered, the main source of inference is from the fact that Yoga is always associated in all later literature with Pashu-pati or Yogi-raj Shiva. This is reinforced by the Sind find of the image of Shiva in a Yogic posture surrounded by animals (Pashu). It is equally true, that the Rig Veda is full of references to Yoga. Brahmarshi Dalwarata Sharma of Gokarn in his "*Yoga-Sadhana*" (in manuscript) has derived the Yoga system on the basis of Rig

and other practices which may be included in Sadhana. The form of the earlier Sadhana of Aurobindo has to be only inferred, it probably comprised intense thinking heart-searching, and contemplation. It was for further intensification of this Sadhana and expediting the consummation that Aurobindo took to Yoga, the Ashtanga Yoga which includes Pranayam and seven other steps.

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Yoga is based on a simple theory about the Inner Self. That Self is detached and independent of the self of the individual, his consciousness and its modifications. The egoistic self is the result of its attachment to the body and the individual existence. The Self however is self-luminous and is attained by intuitive knowledge of the inner working of the human consciousness. To find out the Inner Self, the Purusha, which is beyond the qualities and which is of the nature of self-existent bliss, and to be identified with that Self is the aim of Patanjala Yoga. This Yoga is probably indebted to Samkhya philosophy for the theory of the Non-active and yet eternally Self-aware Purusha. All activity is due to prakriti or Nature. The Purusha or Self is the silent witness, likened often to a mirror which reflects all that goes on in front of it, but is neither affected nor activated by it. Digging deeper and deeper into human consciousness, Yoga has found that neither the objects, nor the senses that perceive them nor the nerves that carry the sensations to the mind nor the mind itself is the cogniser or knower The knower is separate from all these, as is evident from the fact that though all these are working, the knower or the inner person might not know any thing unless he is attentive. So the knower's existence and his awareness are the prime factors in all knowledge. All the perception, conception, cognition, etc., take place in the Chitta or the mind-stuff The Chitta is by nature extrovert, though it has also the capacity to look inward. It conveys impressions from outside inwards and also conveys the orders of the self outward to the senses. In course of time, the self builds itself into a formidable entity and becomes attached to the numerous objects of the senses. Yoga attempts to rid the Chitta of various modifications in its stuff and free the self in order that it may identify itself with the Inner Self rather than with senses or outside objects. It is an attempt to move the Chitta higher in the direction of

Veda alone. Among the Upanishads, it is Katha that refers to it as "Yoga vidhi" when Yama teaches the secret to Nachiketa. The Gita distinguishes clearly Rajayoga, Karmayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Jnanayoga. Whatever the origin however the fact seems to be clear that Yoga as a technique, as a method as a means of concentration and control of the mind and consciousness, of obtaining occult powers and of attaining the highest spiritual perfection is traceable to the remotest past of India.

From the earliest times Yoga is always spoken of as a method of attaining a spiritual goal and not so much as a philosophy or metaphysics. In later literature Yoga is so often mentioned. The Yoga Upanishads, the *Gita* in the "*Mahabharata*" and the "*Yoga-Vasishtha*" deal with this subject at some length but the "*Patanjala Yoga Sutras*" are recognized as the most authoritative treatise. One of the important features of Yogi Patanjali's treatise is that it sets out the full technique of the conquest of self without reference to or insistence on any theistic philosophical or metaphysical theories. His method is based on the study of the nature of the human mind and consciousness. He shows the path of full control by stilling the mind's modifications. Yoga is both a science and an art. It is a science in so far as it probes into the nature of the human apparatus of thinking feeling willing and other activities of the consciousness. It is an art because it teaches practical methods of controlling the mind fully by detaching it from the self and the ego and by promoting communion with the Self which is Sachchidananda. An immense amount of literature probably existed earlier but the masterly and wonderful summation and synthesis of the whole subject in the form of Sutras or aphorisms by Patanjali dating back to about the second century B.C. has cast all other literature into oblivion. Heinrich Robert Zimmer in writing about the Yoga Sutras, characterises them as the most astounding works of philosophical prose (he refers also to the commentary or Bhashya) in the literature of the world. He says further that they are remark

able for their "wonderful sobriety clarity succinctness and elasticity of expression (p. 282. "*The Philosophers of India*")

Yoga is based on a simple theory about the Inner Self. That Self is detached and independent of the self of the individual, his consciousness and its modifications. The egoistic self is the result of its attachment to the body and the individual existence. The Self however is self-luminous and is attained by intuitive knowledge of the inner working of the human consciousness. To find out the Inner Self, the Purusha, which is beyond the qualities and which is of the nature of self-existent bliss, and to be identified with that Self is the aim of Patanjala Yoga. This Yoga is probably indebted to Samkhya philosophy for the theory of the Non-active and yet eternally Self-aware Purusha. All activity is due to prakriti or Nature. The Purusha or Self is the silent witness likened often to a mirror which reflects all that goes on in front of it, but is neither affected nor activated by it. Digging deeper and deeper into human consciousness, Yoga has found that neither the objects, nor the senses that perceive them, nor the nerves that carry the sensations to the mind, nor the mind itself is the cognizer or knower. The knower is separate from all these, as is evident from the fact that though all these are working, the knower or the inner person might not know anything unless he is attentive. So the knower's existence and his awareness are the prime factors in all knowledge. All the perception, conception, cognition, etc., take place in the Chitta or the mind-stuff. The Chitta is by nature extrovert, though it has also the capacity to look inward. It conveys impressions from outside inwards and also conveys the orders of the self outward to the senses. In course of time, the self builds itself into a formidable entity and becomes attached to the numerous objects of the senses. Yoga attempts to rid the Chitta of various modifications in its swirl and free the self in order that it may identify itself with the Inner Self rather than with senses or outside objects. It is an attempt to move the Chitta higher in the direction of

evolution and away from involution. A normal person's consciousness or Chitta is involved in so many things It is not, however the involution that is the cause of sorrow and misery and of the sense of frustration and defeat and humiliation, it is the attachment of the self to the senses and sense objects which is responsible for all that. The evolutionary urge emphasises that a person should be free from this attachment and the consequent instability of the mind, and that he should enjoy the inner calm characteristic of the Purusha the Inner self which is the birthright of the self Yoga avers that when the Chitta is stilled and is rid of the modifications, the self identifies itself with the Inner *Self and rests with it in the original state of bliss.*

Yama, Niyama Asana Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dhyana, *Dharana, and Samadhi are the eight steps of the eightfold* or Ashtanga Yoga These can be divided into four groups of two each in the order in which they have been mentioned, so that one may understand them better

Yama which means self-control consists of Ahimsa (non-injury in thought word and deed) Satya (truthfulness in everything) Asteya (non-stealing includes non-storing) Brahmacharya (continence in thought word and action) and Aparigraha (non-acceptance of gifts and offerings) These should be observed by all aspirants irrespective of time, place and circumstance They have the weight dignity and effect of the great Vratas or ethical observances. Similarly Niyama which means rules or regulations is five-fold as follows: Shoucha is internal and external cleanliness and purification Santosha is contentment Tapa is austerity Swadhyaya is the study of the properly chosen subjects and the fifth is Ishwara-pranidhana, dedication or surrender of everything to God.

Yama and Niyama, the first dyad in this system is important in a special sense. Obviously it is purificatory but it is basic. If one's body, senses and the mind which are the main instruments of this Sadhana, are not pure the danger is that later at any

time and at any stage, there might be a fall in store for the aspirant. As an aspirant advances, he feels the influx of mental, emotional and spiritual powers and if he has not gone through the process of intense purification, he is likely to be exposed to temptations which would lead him astray. Then, instead of developing into a real Yogi or a Yoga-aroodha, he becomes a Yoga-bhrashta, or one fallen from Yoga.

The next dyad is Asana and Pranayama. Asana is a bodily posture in which one is required to be steady. It should be easy to adopt and the spine has to be erect and straight. After practice, one should be able to hold on for hours. It is Padmasana that is often recommended. It should not tire the aspirant but at the same time it should not induce drowsiness or sleep. Pranayama comes next, the control of breath, which leads to the control of the vital powers. Through this process it is sought to still the mind. The control of Prana leads to control of the mind, and it is equally true so say the Yoga books, that control of the mind leads to control of the vital powers in the body. Here, however Pranayam means and includes control and regulation of the inhalation and exhalation process, as well as holding the breath in and out at will. Together with these physical practices, contemplation is recommended. In the beginning, contemplation should be limited to the process of concentrating one's mind on the breathing action itself. These practices gradually qualify a person for further and greater concentration and contemplation.

Pratyahara and Dharana follow. Pratyahara is withdrawal of the senses from sense-objects. Simple self-observation will show that our senses continuously run after sense-objects. It is this running after objects which prevents the mind from self-contemplation. The Gita says that the mind is, as it were, tossed by the stormy waves of the desires. Pratyahara is a process of discipline. It prevents the senses from running hither and thither like a wayward child. It is to a certain extent a negative process but it includes leading the senses inwards into the Chitta. The Sutra

gives Dharana the next place of importance. And Dharana is definitely a positive step. It makes one capable of holding the mind and fixing it on the cherished goal. These two together with Dhyana (contemplation) are probably meant when Zimmer designates the process as "introvert-concentration (p. 283 "*The Philosophies of India*") The last two steps lead naturally to consummation. Dhyana is the fixation and continuous holding of the mind in contemplation. It is unbroken concentration of the mind on the object. The next step has neither a particular form nor requires an object for contemplation. The Chitta is concentrated on and is in communion with the Self. That is Samadhi. To attain prolonged Samadhi is the ambition of all aspirants in this line.

This in essence is the general technique of the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali Through the course of ages, a huge superstructure has been built on it and we have now Hatha Yoga, Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga Bhakti Yoga, and Jnana Yoga. There are others which are current but less prominently mentioned namely Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga, Trimarga Yoga, Adhyatma Yoga, and Kundalini Yoga. There are certain basic things common to all these Yogas. The ultimate aim in all is the same and that is, to experience communion and continued unadulterated bliss of identity and unitive life with the Supreme Spirit Among the means the most important namely concentration and meditation are to be found in all Yogas. Yama and Niyama are also compulsory in each Yoga All Yogas are open to all to follow irrespective of religion race sex, or age But there is a difference in each Yoga because the respective systems lay stress on using predominantly one or the other of the human faculties and powers For instance the Sadhak who mainly uses the body and the vital powers as instruments is called a Hathayogi, while one who uses predominantly his emotive power is called a Bhaktiyogi, and so on. But every Sadhak whether he relies on his vital power his mind, his powers of will and action his emotions, his intelle

or power of discrimination, has to see to it that he purifies his powers, controls them, conserves them, concentrates them and ultimately dedicates them through intense meditation to the Supreme Spirit. This technique is common to all Yogas and was founded originally on the principles of the Patanjala Yoga Sutras.

Aurobindo's Yoga, though it began with Pranayama and as a simple Raja Yoga, later developed into Integral Yoga after vast experiences in each Yoga and his masterly synthesis of all. To revert to his Sadhana, let us see how he proceeded after beginning the Pranayama practices in 1904.

Two more years of comparatively peaceful life in Baroda lay between him and his eventual plunge in 1906 into the whirlpool of the great national upsurge called the Swadeshi movement. It will be more convenient to treat separately these two years and the further block of four which were spent in active politics. Aurobindo refers often to the Gita and the Upanishads but seldom to the Yoga Sutras. This might well be because he was not in need of day-to-day guidance so much as in the matter of the main direction and as regards crucial points. During this period, his Pranayam practices became prolonged and more and more intense. His Sadhana was strongly influencing him, and a distinct stamp of spirituality was appearing on all that he thought and did. He was immersed in the work of the revival of the glory of India and the revitalisation of her life. But in his mind the conviction grew that all re-orientation in this land should be based on spiritual awakening. To him this awakening did not mean only admiration of the past or an inclination to other-worldliness or a passive approach to problems. He visualised the vigorous awakening of the "Vedanta Kesari" the lion of Vedanta, and the shaking of its manes after the slothful slumber of centuries. He thought of the spiritualization of every worthwhile activity of the whole nation. Every day of his Sadhana during this period, while it took him by strides towards the liberation of his soul from the shackles of the senses

and worldly ambitions illumined also his vision of a new India rising on the horizon her soul afire with spiritual aspiration

We have already observed that even in Aurobindo's politics and throughout his political career the spiritual note was predominant It may be questioned whether he would have entered politics at all if it had not afforded him an opportunity to rouse the spiritual consciousness of the people The spiritual strain and sometimes even a religious strain in the nationalism he preached was so obvious and frank that some of his opponents ironically remarked that he should abandon politics and take to religion! He saw that God was behind the awakening in India and told the people so in the clearest terms.

Usually Yoga philosophy metaphysics and other such subjects are associated with Sannyas with retreat from life or with escapism Aurobindo hated every kind of escapism and cowardly evasion of life which is inherently and creatively active and ought to be full of vigour and adventure. At the same time an intense inwardness developed in his outlook on life and on problems that faced the country As early as 1893-1894 he had written regarding national regeneration that our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves but our own crying weaknesses our cowardice our purblind sentimentalism He said that our appeal the appeal of every high souled and self respecting nation ought not to lie to the opinion of the Anglo-Indians no, nor yet to the British sense of justice but to our own reviving sense of manhood to our own sincere fellow feeling with the silent and suffering people of India He increasingly believed that India's salvation could only come through faith and spiritual discipline But his was not mere blind faith in past glories neither did he wish only to repeat the past He felt that a great past ought to be followed by a greater future and the evolution of spiritual consciousness in India should be able to write new chapters in the history of man.

What exact progress he made in Yogic practices during the

next two years of his stay in Baroda, from 1904-06, it is difficult to say But judging from the fact that by 1908, he required the help of an adept to guide him, his was not a lingering and lazy Sadhana. In the matter of his advance in spirituality and the firm establishment of a spiritual foundation in his mind, we have ample evidence in a most intimate and ennobling letter to his wife Mrinalini on 30th of August 1905. It marks a definite stage in the perilous journey he had undertaken. Since it is a most revealing picture of the working of his mind at that time, it deserves to be quoted in full (The original is in Bengali) "My dearest Mrinalini

I have received your letter of the 24th August. I was very sorry to read that your parents are again suffering from bereavement. But you have not mentioned which of their children has passed away But what use is our grief and our sorrow? Our quest for happiness in this world reveals to us sorrow in the very midst of happiness and sorrow enveloping it all over This holds good not merely in the case of our attachment to our children but it is applicable to all our desires for wordly things. The only remedy is to be firm and calm in one's mind and to surrender all joy and sorrow at the feet of Bhagwan.

(Then follow lines regarding money matters, which have been omitted as being of no consequence.)

Now I revert to that matter (probably he had already written to her on this subject). Possibly by this time you have realised that the person with whom your lot is cast is a very peculiar gentleman. Somehow my thoughts and feelings, my ideals, my field of action are not like those of others in this country Everything with me is different and rather uncommon. You know how people regard uncommon opinion, extraordinary attempts, and high aspirations. They call all that madness. But when the madman succeeds, he is no longer called a madman but is looked upon as a genius. But how many of such people succeed? It is only ten among thousands that are usually un-

common and it is only one among the ten that is successful. It is yet a far cry for me to talk of success. I have not yet fully entered the lists. I must at present be looked upon as a madman. It is of course very inauspicious for a woman to be in the hands of a madman because usually a woman's mind is occupied with worldly joys and sorrows. A madman has only sorrow to give to his wife, why then talk of any joy?

The founders of the Hindu religion knew all this very well. They looked upon extraordinary life, great endeavour and high aspiration with respect. Whether it was a madman or a great man, they had regard for uncommon qualities. But all this leads to great hardship to women who have married such people. What then is the remedy? The Rishis found out a good remedy. They said to women "instead of looking to anybody else you should regard the husband as your greatest Guru. The wife is the equal partner of the husband in his Dharma. It follows that she should help and cooperate in the Dharma which her husband has chosen. She should give him advice, encourage him in his pursuits, look upon him as her cherished idol and share with him his joys and sorrows. It is the man's right to choose the vocation he wants to follow and it is the woman's duty to help and encourage him.

"Now the question before you is whether you should follow the dictates of the Hindu Dharma or act according to the new ways of modern civilization. On account of marriage your lot is cast with a madman. Perhaps it is the result of some sin you might have committed in your past life! It is advisable for you to strike a compromise with your fate. Now what would be the form of that compromise? Would you listen to the common run of people and forsake me on the plea that I am a madman? After all the madman will go his destined way. It is not possible for you to control him and keep him under your influence. He has a stronger character than yours. What then will you do? Simply weep and shed tears in a

corner? Or will you get along with the madman and be his companion (pagalar sange pagli) and help him on? You know the story of the queen (Gandhari) who blindfolded her eyes in order to suffer blindness along with her king consort (Dhritarashtra). Even if you have learnt your lessons in Brahmo schools, after all you belong to a Hindu familly and the blood of Hindu ancients courses in your veins. I have no doubt about your following the path of a devoted Hindu wife.

"I am a victim of three insanities, if I can call them so. My first insanity consists in my firm belief that the qualifications, genius, higher education, learning and wealth that Bhagavan has given me all belong to Him. We have a right to spend only as much as is required for the upkeep of the family and is absolutely needed. What remains ought to be rendered back to Bhagavan. If I spend all that I have on myself, for my pleasures, for luxury then I am a veritable thief. The Hindu Shastras say that he who does not give back to the Lord what he receives from Him, is a thief. So far I have given only one-eighth to the Lord and spent seven-eighth on my pleasures. I have been engrossed in worldly happiness. Half of my life has been already wasted. After all, even a beast maintains itself and its family!

I have now fully realised that so far I have lived merely an animal life and have indulged in moral theft. I am full of remorse and am disgusted with myself. Now I must say thus far and no further. I have now ceased sinning in that manner for life. But, what after all is the meaning of giving to the Lord? Of course, it means spending for purposes which are good and of a religious and spiritual nature. I have no regrets for whatever I have paid to Sarojini (sister) or Usha. To give to others is a part of religion. To help those who have run to us for succour is much more so. But one cannot be said to have discharged one's duty if he pays only to brothers and sisters. In these hard days, practically the whole of the country is at my

doors for help. There are thirty crores that is 300 millions of my brethren in the country and many of them are starving The majority is ground down by hardship and misery they may be said to be just living The burden of helping them also is on us.

"What have you to say? Will you be my co-sharer in this meritorious work? I wish to live like a common man eat like him and clothe myself like him and spend on the self the minimum that is necessary Whatever I can spare I would like to spend for the Lord If you too think alike and are willing to sacrifice I can certainly fulfil my desire You were saying that you were not advanced Here I am making you an offer and showing the way to real advancement. Will you follow this path?

"The second madness that has recently taken hold of me is the determination happen what may to see God face to face, whatever the means. Now a-days it is fashionable in the name of religion to take the name of God almost at every step, to pray in public and show people how religious one is I do not want to go after that kind of religion If God exists then there must be some way which would lead one to experience His existence, to see Him face to face I have determined to tread the path that leads to God however difficult it might be The Hindu Dharma declares that that path lies in one's own body in one's own mind It has also laid down the rules which ought to be observed I have started observing all those rules. Within a month I have been able to testify to the truth of what Hindu Dharma has laid down I am seeing and experiencing all the signs that it has indicated I now desire that I should take you also along with me You may not be able to follow me so far and so exactly since you seem to lack the necessary knowledge. But there is no harm in following step by step *Siddhi* or fulfilment is bound to come to everyone who follows the path It entirely depends upon the person however to choose to take to

the path. Nobody can take you there by force. If you agree to take to it I shall write to you again in connection with this matter

"My third madness is with regard to Mother India. Other people look upon their country as some material thing, consisting of vast plains, fields forests, mountains and rivers. I look upon India as my Mother I am devoted to her I worship her If somebody mounts on the chest of his mother and begins to drink her blood, what does her son do? Does he sit down for meals, and settle down with a calm and a quiet mind to enjoy life with his wife and children? Or does he run to the succour of his suffering mother? I am confident that I have the strength in me to bring salvation to these our fallen people. It is not of physical strength that I am speaking. I am not going to wage the battle with the help of swords and rifles. The strength I speak of is the strength of knowledge. There is not only Kshatratej, the strength of warriors, in this world. There exists also Brahmatej, the strength of Brahminhood which is founded on knowledge. This is not a new idea, nor does it belong to modern days. I am born with it. This idea is running through every vein of mine. Bhagavan has sent me down to this earth for fulfilling this great mission. This great idea began to sprout in my mind when I was hardly fourteen. It took firm root and was securely founded when I was eighteen. Having heard what the maternal uncle said, you think that he is the villain who is dragging your good husband to a bad path. But it is your seemingly good husband who is dragging him as well as hundreds into this path, call it good or bad. He will continue the process and drag thousands more. I do not know and cannot say whether fulfilment will come in my own lifetime, but I am sure it is bound to come.

"Now I ask you what do you wish to do in this matter? The wife is the Shakti, the power of the husband. Do you want to be the disciple of Usha and tell beads in the name of the

Sahib and worship the foreign master? Do you wish to lessen the power of your husband by being indifferent? Would you not double his powers by sympathy and zeal? You may be inclined to say What is an ordinary girl like me to do in an important matter such as this? *I have neither the strength of mind nor the intellectual capacity required for this great work I am afraid even to think of such matters. I propose to you a simple remedy Seek the feet of God and surrender yourself.* Take to the path which leads to God Then all the things that you lack will be given to you without delay He who seeks the protection of God is freed from all fear in course of time And if you cease listening to all and sundry and confide in me I can lend you my strength. That would not in any way lessen my strength On the other hand it would increase all the more We all say that the wife is the Shakti the power of her husband. This means that the husband sees his own reflection and his prototype in his wife He hears the echo of his own ambition from his wife and thus redoubles his own power

What do you intend living as you are now for all your life? I shall have fine clothes I shall eat nice food I shall laugh and dance and enjoy all pleasures—this mood of your mind cannot be said to reflect the advance of your soul In recent days unfortunately this kind of narrow and selfish outlook which is rather disgusting has taken hold of the minds of our womenfolk Cast all this away and come with me We are all here in this world to do the work of God Let us begin it.

"You are too straightforward and that seems to be a defect in your character You listen to whatever is said by all kinds of people This makes your mind unstable Your power of *discrimination* has no chance to develop. You have lost the capacity of concentration. You will have to improve this state of things You will have to listen to one voice only and thus accumulate knowledge You must fix your mind on a single aim

and try to achieve it with devotion. You will have to be steady and firm in your purpose in utter disregard of adverse opinion and criticism.

"There is one more defect but that is not of your character but of the times and circumstances. Bengal is subject to this weakness. People are not willing to give serious attention even to serious things. Religion, philanthropy high aspirations, great endeavour salvation of the country and such other high and noble things are made fun of or ridiculed. They make light of such things and pass on. Your education in a Brahmo school has been responsible for something of this defect in you. I found it in Barin (his younger brother) also. All of us suffer from it to a greater or a lesser degree. The people of Deoghar are full of it. One can get rid of this weakness only by the firmness of one's mind. You are capable of doing it very easily. Once you get yourself used to thinking, your real nature will manifest itself. You are naturally inclined to do good to others and you have a sacrificing nature. What you lack is a firm mind. Devotion to God would bring you that strength.

"That was the secret matter about which I wanted to speak to you. Without divulging it to anybody else you should think about all these things with a steady mind. There is nothing to this to be afraid of. There are many things which ought to be considered. In the beginning, you need not do anything except meditating for half an hour on God. You should place before Him your strong aspirations in the form of an intense prayer. This is sure to prepare your mind gradually. You should always pray to Him that you will never stand in the way of your husband's course of life, his ideal and his attempts to reach God and that instead you will always help him and serve as his instrument. Will you do this?

Yours ,,

The whole of this letter is extremely valuable but especially

Sahib and worship the foreign master? Do you wish to lessen the power of your husband by being indifferent? Would you not double his powers by sympathy and zeal? You may be inclined to say "What is an ordinary girl like me to do in an important matter such as this? I have neither the strength of mind nor the intellectual capacity required for this great work. I am afraid even to think of such matters." I propose to you a simple remedy. Seek the feet of God and surrender yourself. Take to the path which leads to God. Then all the things that you lack will be given to you without delay. He who seeks the protection of God is freed from all fear in course of time. And if you cease listening to all and sundry and confide in me I can lend you my strength. That would not in any way lessen my strength. On the other hand it would increase all the more. We all say that the wife is the Shakti, the power of her husband. This means that the husband sees his own reflection and his prototype in his wife. He hears the echo of his own ambition from his wife and thus redoubles his own power.

What do you intend living as you are now for all your life? "I shall have fine clothes, I shall eat nice food, I shall laugh and dance and enjoy all pleasures"—this mood of your mind cannot be said to reflect the advance of your soul. In recent days unfortunately this kind of narrow and selfish outlook which is rather disgusting has taken hold of the minds of our womenfolk. Cast all this away and come with me. We are all here in this world to do the work of God. Let us begin it.

You are too [illegible] that seems to be a defect in your character. You listen to whatever is said by all kinds of people. This makes your mind unstable. Your power of discrimination has no chance to develop. You have lost the capacity of concentration. You will have to improve this state of things. You will have to listen to one voice only and thus accumulate knowledge. You must fix your mind on a single aim

on the power of knowledge, of Tapas (the power of austerities and mental energy), of moral character and of spirituality

This then was Aurobindo's attitude towards India and the anticipated solution of her problems. He was quite clear in his attitude towards the problem of God and his own relations with Him. To him God, the Supreme Reality existed beyond doubt. He considered that everything he had came from God as a gift, and to Him it must be returned. He was only a trustee for its proper use.

Since the fact of God's existence was beyond doubt, it was inevitable that Aurobindo should wish to find a path to Him and to possess Him. He was remorseful that much of his life so far had been wasted. He was determined to see God face to face, whatever the difficulties. His determination can be compared only with that of Buddha to apprehend truth, or of Shri Ramakrishna to meet God. He says that after personal spiritual experiences within a month of beginning Yoga practices, he was convinced of the truth of the Hindu religion. He discovered the inner signs which appear to an aspirant when practising Yoga. While exhorting his wife, he partially reveals how a beginner should make a start. He says that the aspirant should submit and surrender to God, through heartfelt prayer God would then descend, remove all deficiencies and bless the devotee. This is, in fact, the first lesson in Integral Yoga which Aurobindo later elaborately developed step by step. He emphasised that the Door of God was not closed to anyone who wished to enter Even to the weakest and the most fallen, there was entry One must but knock and the Door would stand ajar A heartfelt voluntary dedication at the feet of God, by way of intense prayer would in time take the aspirant to Him.

Aurobindo wrote this letter from Baroda in August 1905, where he continued his Sadhana for another year In August 1906, he went to Calcutta for good. All the time he succeeded in gradually stilling his mind completely a consummation des-

so in connection with Aurobindo's Sadhana, as it sheds much light upon the inner-working of his mind. The letter, being a holograph and also autobiographical, is authoritative and therefore unquestionable a very intimate and frank letter written utterly sincerely It was written to his wife whom he held in high esteem and every word has come from the heart, there is no make-believe in any part of it. He wrote it for her only, under a seal of secrecy and with the avowed intention of converting her to his view *He has revealed to her every action and reaction* of his inner being and the motive-power behind its working at that particular time It was written in August 1905, that is, about a year after the beginning of his Yogic practices. He makes reference to his early experiences which confirmed his convictions regarding the truth of Hindu Dharma

Since his Sadhana is the relevant subject here let us see what important points relating to it emerge from the letter The seed of spiritualistic nationalism had been sown in his mind when he was fourteen and while he was still in England. In essence, he felt that India was a veritable Mother and that her redemption from bondage as well as her emancipation from the grip of materialism and of modern ideals must come through a revival of spirituality and Brahmatej By the time that he was eighteen and at Cambridge the seed had struck firm root. This explains why he contrived to fail in the riding test at the final examination necessary to qualify for the Indian Civil Service in 1892 There was a definite prompting in his heart that he was not meant for the Service but for something higher and nobler He felt that his mission came from Heaven and that he had already launched on a long and difficult journey In 1905 he recapitulated the momentous history of the development of his ideals and the means of attaining them He ruled out the use of Kshatratej and was equally definite with regard to his use only of Brahmatej. As distinct from Kshatratej the prowess of warriors Brahmatej, the prowess of Brahmins is based

basis of all real cognition. That True Self is the Self-illumined Self-existent Supraconscious and Supracosmic Reality. He believed in all this and was convinced that this reality should be pursued not only when there was frustration in the world of the senses or disgust because of surfeit, but because it was a real hunger of the human soul. Reality in itself is intrinsically something magnificent and magnetically attractive. It was, he thought the basic nature of all human consciousness to evolve along this line. But for him, it was not the end of things or the final goal of Yoga. He had already clear promptings that not only certain practices but every activity and all life should be Yoga. He had realised that to act as an instrument of the Divine is a spiritual status higher than the soul's merger or quiescence. That was why he thought his active political life could never conceivably come in the way of his spiritual Sadhana and his Yoga practices. When the call for political action came, he answered it. It was a further opportunity for a new and more intense Sadhana.

The Upanishads speak of the supraconscious stage (Prajnam) in which all ordinary experiences are transcended and there is one great, limitless, homogenous experience without duality. This is the stage of the non-conceptual intuition of the self where knower knowledge, and known merge into one. It is a totality of simple and undifferentiated experience, the bedrock of all our ordinary consciousness and knowledge. It is at once the essence of our individual self and the highest principle of the universe the Brahman, the Paramatman. We may ask the question whether Aurobindo sought absorption as of a pinch of salt in water or of the rivers into the sea. The reply is that he emphasised the famous statement in the Mundaka Upanishad which says, he is greatest among the knowers of Brahman who sports with the Atman, who, out of love, is one with the Atman and yet full of activity (Kriyavan). It is obvious that the activity indicated is not always and necessarily physical. The eternal and ecstatic dance of Shiva the Nataraja, Aurobindo

cribed by Yoga as the stopping of the modifications of the mind Success in a remarkable degree came to him by the end of 1907, after he had settled in Calcutta. Let us now consider some questions which arise out of these facts.

Yoga and its practice is usually associated with a regular and peaceful life which affords enough leisure to observe all its meticulous rules and regulations An exciting political life in troublous times in the very hub of activity cannot be said to be propitious for or congenial to Yoga. But here we must consider the mind of Aurobindo in order to see how he was able to continue his intense Sadhana in the midst of a stormy life and an eventful career Though he had not yet formulated his theory of Integral Yoga or worked out fully its synthesis one thing was certain he was not prepared to carry on Sadhana only for individual salvation or for attaining supreme quiescence As we have seen he was constitutionally against any form of escapism. Therefore even in his early days of Sadhana, the attempt was two-fold While he tried to attain Samadhi (Swarupe Avasthanam) he endeavoured also to put himself entirely at the disposal of the Lord for every vigorous action necessary for the liberation and regeneration of India. We shall revert later to this aspect of Sri Aurobindo s Yoga in 1908

The ineffable intuitive as well as unitive experience of the Supreme was the immediate goal of Aurobindo s Sadhana. He tried to fulfil the fundamental conditions of its attainment. He had already to his credit elevation of the moral life absolute control of passions and desire observance of Brahmacharya (continence as well as the practice of concentrating on Brahman) and he had made an all-out attempt to steady the mind by banishing all excitement from it He was also practising purification of the body and control of breath His ultimate aim was the disassociation of the self from perception sensation, thought ideas feeling and other modifications of the mind-stuff and its (self's) identification with the True Self which is the

completely altered. I do not wish to reveal all that in this letter. You come here. Then I shall tell you all that I wish to tell you. But just now I would like to convey to you this much that hereafter I am not master of myself. I shall have to go wherever Bhagavan leads me like a robot in His hand. I shall have to do what He commands like His bond-slave. I know that it may be difficult for you to understand this language. But it is necessary for me to tell you the fact as it is. Otherwise, my movements would be objected to by you and they may cause pain and sorrow to you. You may misunderstand me and feel that I am neglecting you and going my own way. Kindly do not think so. So far I have sinned against you very much. It is but natural that you are very much dissatisfied with my conduct. But now I have lost my freedom. Henceforward, you will have to take it that all I do is not dependent upon my own volition but is entirely at the command of the Lord. When you come here, you will be able to understand fully what I am saying. I hope in the meanwhile, that the Lord, out of His infinite mercy will bless you with the same light with which He has endowed me. But that entirely depends upon His abundant grace. If you wish intensely to follow me as my devoted wife, then you should engage yourself in whole-hearted efforts towards that end. He is sure to respond to your singlemindedness and show you the path out of compassion. You should not show this letter to anyone, as I have written to you about the innermost secret of my heart. To you alone have I revealed this matter and to none else. I am barred from communicating this to others. Sufficient unto the day.

Your loving husband."

One cannot help recalling the famous exhortation of Sri Krishna to Arjuna on the field of battle when he said, Be thou my instrument. I have done everything. I am doing all things, and in the fullness of time, I shall do what is necessary. Realise

said, is the true symbol of the cosmic activity of the Supreme Spirit. This is the secret of his extreme alertness and intense activity in whatever he did whether as professor at Baroda, or a political leader in India or as a prisoner in Alipore or a Yogi in Pondicherry He never looked upon these activities and Yoga as either inconsistent or separate They were all one and of a piece to him and such as must lead to the same goal if performed in the proper spirit and with a full understanding of their basic harmony Stemming as they do from one and the same Supraconsciousness the Uttama Purusha the Purushottam of the Gita, they have the same destination.

We can be certain that there were no separate compartments in Aurobindo's mind his Sadhana proceeded at a rapid pace inspite of his outward activities He indulged in the most exciting activity and yet continued his Sadhana every moment of his conscious life. When partial consummation came we find him enjoying the infinite stillness of mind side by side with every one of his activities, as if they were all directed by God The second published letter to his wife dated the *17th* of February *1907* and *written from 23 Scott's Lane Calcutta is from* this point of view of great importance The translation of the original Bengali letter is as follows —

Dear Mrinalini

"I did not write to you for long This is a very old failing with me What other remedy can I seek but pardon from you out of your natural goodness? Habits which have got firmly established cannot be overcome in a day Possibly I may require my whole life to be free from this defect.

There was a proposal that I should go over there on the 8th of January but I could not do so. It was not of my own will that I did not go there. I had to go where Bhagavan led me. This time I did not go for my own work but I was in the midst of His work. This time the condition of my mind has

experience of seeing God face to face, and thus realizing his inmost ambition. Before we discuss this, however let us see what he says in the third published letter The translation of the original Bengali runs thus:—

6th of December 1907

"Dear Mrinalini,

" Here I have not a moment to spare. I have so many responsibilities to discharge. I have to write for the papers, I have the heavy burden of the Congress organisational work, and I have to clear the entanglements regarding the *Bande Mataram*" (the daily and weekly) I am so overburdened that I am not able to finish the work at all. On the top of it, I have my own work spiritual Sadhana which I can never neglect, much less abandon.

"Dear dear will you listen to me? I am now in a great fix. I am pulled in so many different directions that I am likely to go mad. If at such a juncture you are not calm and collected in mind, my anxiety will increase and my grief will multiply On the other hand, if you write to me with enthusiasm and in a soothing way I shall derive special strength from you. I shall then be able to overcome all fear and adversity with a cheerful mind. I do know that your being lonely in Deoghar is a hardship to you. But your sorrow would not be able to overwhelm you, if you steady your mind and depend upon faith. Now that you have been married to me some sorrow is inevitable. We are bound to live apart occasionally The reason is quite plain. I cannot, like other ordinary people, keep before me the ideal of always doing what is necessary to make my family members and my relatives happy and content. In these circumstances, the path of duty and Dharma that I have chosen is also yours. There is no other way for you but that of trying to derive happiness from the fulfilment which I may achieve in my appointed task. One word more. Most of the people with whom you are now

that you are but an instrument in my hands." This was Krishna's injunction to Arjuna when the latter became too egotistic and thought of himself too highly as the 'doer" of things Aurobindo being called by the Lord had surrendered himself completely As a result, his self stepped aside allowing the Lord to be the main directive force This in itself is a very high attainment. To surrender oneself on occasion, when for instance one is faced with a momentous issue, or when one is at a loss to know what to do is not very difficult or uncommon: it happens in the case of many conscientious and God-fearing men and women But to enthrone God in one's heart as a constant ruler and an unfailing guide and to eliminate the "I" altogether is a spiritual achievement of a very high order It is tantamount to holding the self in suspended animation and allowing the Higher Self to take entire charge In such circumstances the I" continues because there is canalisation of continuous human energy in an individual but it is only a silent witness to the fact that its house is run by a superior and a higher power!

In the Gita, Shri Krishna says that the whole universe is set in motion and is moving as if it were "Yantraroodha (hitched on to a machine) Aurobindo found himself in that position when he wrote this letter to his wife His Yoga was self started and self-directed and his whole life was God inspired. It continued to be so to the end. He once said when speaking about his writings in *Arya* and his literary *magnum opus* "*Savitri* that it was not so much that he wrote them but that "they came" and he was only an instrument in recording them

Another letter written to Srimati Mrinalini in December of the same year reveals the continuance of the same process of Sadhana though some irregularity in Pranayama is indicated It shows that Aurobindo was feeling the strain of his political activities. It was in Alipore jail that the next stage was reached, when he had "Darshan of Shri Krishna. Then he had the

summoned to Baroda from Gwalior This meeting (on 28 December 1907) was a landmark in Aurobindo's spiritual Sadhana.

After listening to an account of his experiences and the course of action he had so far taken, Yogi Lele advised Aurobindo to make a supreme effort to empty his mind completely of all that could be called mind-stuff. After three days of effort Aurobindo accomplished this task: the ego along with its mind-stuff had made an exit. Supreme calm then descended on him, reached the depths of his heart and established itself there. It was a calm which he had on occasion experienced before. Lele told him to be prepared to listen to a voice after the calm (Nishpanda-bhava) had been established. But none came. Aurobindo then journeyed to Poona and Bombay in response to the call of duty and Lele accompanied him. He had now realized the utter silence and infinite calm of the Supreme Brahman, beyond time and space. It was an experience in which the whole of creation seemed to be nowhere. It was a calm which seemed to be the sole Reality all else was nothing! But it brought fresh difficulties. Neither Aurobindo nor Lele felt that Sadhana ended there. This was the experience of only one node of the total Reality It was the experience of Being, and excluded the Becoming part of the Reality which is Being-Becoming taken as an integral whole. Aurobindo considered that after this experience and its part-realization, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to continue his political activities. It was at this time that Lele, led by his own intuition, suggested a way by which Aurobindo could endeavour to surrender his whole Sadhana to the Inner Lord and obtain from Him his direction. His advice was that the best way in which his Sadhana could be continued was by obtaining internal direction from above. Aurobindo agreed to this. His complete dedication had already transformed him into an automation of the Lord regarding his political activities. He was now to place himself entirely at His disposal regarding his Sadhana also. The Lord in the heart, was now to be the Guru of Aurobindo. At

staying are our elders. If they happen to speak bitterly or say something improper, I think you should bear with them and never get angry. Do not believe that what they speak is from their heart or that they want to torment you purposely by saying something thoughtless. Many a time, a bad word escapes the lips while in anger. You should not brood over such things. If you think that it is rather too hard for you to stay there, I shall write to Girish Babu and he will make arrangements till I am in the Congress.

Yours "

This letter reveals the overwhelming nature of his God ordained duties. At the same time, it is solicitous and tender regarding the feelings and the position of his helpless wife. Aurobindo's idea that the wife is Shakti and that he could derive immense strength from her if only she heartily shared his Dharma persists and no doubt continued to be with him until the end of his life. He pleads that separation and the other hardships to which she was being subjected were a natural and inevitable consequence of his highly dedicated life. His leaving Baroda, his forsaking a lucrative post for one on a pittance in the National College at Calcutta, his undertaking to write for various journals without remuneration, his night and day effort to build the Nationalist Party were all done entirely at the bidding of the Lord. It was impossible for his wife, Mrinalini, to understand but Aurobindo pleaded with her to try to sympathise with him and his work, and above all to have faith in him and his Lord.

Then came the National Congress Session at Surat. But his inner calmness and equanimity were not disturbed. He went through the whole drama as if aware of what would happen. As we know after the Surat split he visited a number of big towns. It was before and during this tour that he was confronted with a spiritual problem and Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele was

can enter throw them away from your mind till your mind is vacant and capable of entire silence." All this happened before February 1908. When Barindra K. Ghose invited Yogi Vishnu B. Lele to Calcutta in February 1908, the intention was to request his help in the spiritual training of the revolutionary youth of Bengal. For some days Lele stayed in Calcutta in Seal's lodge. In the course of their talks Lele became apprehensive that the voice Aurobindo was following was Asuric (demoniac) in nature. This referred to revolutionary activities, which Aurobindo later abandoned. Lele said it would be difficult for him to undertake further responsibility of Aurobindo's Sadhana if he continued to follow that voice. Aurobindo immediately absolved Lele from his responsibility and fell back entirely on his own inner guidance. Thus ended one of the most delicate relationships ever developed between two souls in the course of Sadhana. (P 254 "*Dakshina*", August 1951)

When asked later (in 1938) if Lele had realisation, Aurobindo said, "Of course but I saw that he had ambition and ego." Here are some important observations regarding Yogi Lele and himself in his letter to Dilip K. Roy: "After four years of Pranayama and other practices on my own, with no other result than increased health and energy some psychophysical phenomena, a great outflow of poetic creation, a limited power of subtle light (luminous patterns and figures etc.) mostly with the waking eye, I had a complete arrest and was at a loss. At this juncture I was induced to meet a man without fame whom I did not know a Bhakta Lele with a limited mind but with some experience and evocative power. We sat together and I followed with an absolute fidelity what he instructed me to do myself not understanding in the least where he was leading me or where I was myself going. The first result was a series of tremendously powerful experiences and radical changes of consciousness which he had never intended—for they were Advaitic and Vedantic and he was against Advaita Vedanta—and

last an extraordinary Shishya had secured an extraordinary Guru!

During this tour, Aurobindo complained to Lele that sometimes his mind went blank as he faced an audience Lele gave him advice, which was followed and words proper to the occasion began to flow from a source above the mind This resembles *the experience of* Swami Vivekananda when years before he had addressed the Parliament of Religions in Chicago The whole of the ego-source dried up in Aurobindo and the higher fountain opened with gusto, showering ideas through him in an *unceasing flow of appropriate phrase His nationalism afterwards* became much more spiritual and his politics still more pure

This kind of experience is not exceptional or peculiar but the speed with which Aurobindo attained it was truly amazing An experience so to say, of Shoonya, i.e., zero, is described in some books It is hinted that one has to go beyond this state to know the whole truth A complete and abiding stillness of one's consciousness is followed by the experience of total disappearance or absence of the material world. But this is only a negative experience Reality is not a void it is an existence, it is Being It is described as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. A few months later when he was within the four walls of Alipore jail the positive experience of the unceasing immanence of the Supreme Spirit in *everything came to Aurobindo*

Aurobindo was always mindful of his debt to Yogi Lele and mentioned his name with respect He once said that Lele had helped him (a) to gain a very vivid and graphic experience of the still mind and absolutely calm Brahmic consciousness—vast, infinite and illimitable (b) to acquire the power to speak and write without the use of the mind, and (c) to stick to the habit of submitting to the direction of the higher power above the mind He writes, "It was my great debt to Lele that he showed me this. Sit in meditation he said, 'but do not think *look only* at *your mind you will see thoughts coming* into it before they

preparation, his Sadhana went on and we know the result. He has described the consummation in his Uttarpara speech delivered after his release. It is a glowing account of the glorious vision of Shri Krishna pervading everything, from each atom of the cosmic dust to the nearest star from the first protein molecule which started life to the newest babe born on earth. It was obviously the realisation of the cosmic consciousness, of the Divine at once immanent and transcendent. It can be summed up in the pregnant phrase of the Gita, "Vasudevah Sarvam" (all is Vasudeva) It was no longer the unutterable stillness of spaceless and timeless Brahman, nor the mere dance of dynamic creation but it was both in One, the all-pervasive Purushottam, in Whom all meet and find their meaning and synthesis. He had also glimpses of the power higher than the mind which is the link between our consciousness and the Consciousness of the Divine. But more of this later we must restrict ourselves here to discussing his vision of the immanent Divine while in Alipore jail.

Aurobindo himself calls this period of incarceration as "Ashramvas", life in a hermitage. "Its only result was that I found God" he says in his small book, "*Kara Kahini*" the story of his prison life. (It is written in Bengali, and is an interesting document) But this particular Sadhana in jail is important and also its fulfilment. For a while, he says, he was shaken in faith, as he considered his imprisonment an uncalled for interference in God's work. But after three days, a voice came to him and said "Wait and see" He then remembered that he had neglected to answer the call to seclusion that had come to him a month earlier This was a sequel to his disobedience! Even in God's government the penalty for civil disobedience, it appears, is jail! He was allowed to have the Gita and the Upanishads. They were his constant companions. In one of his speeches which refers to this period (*Speeches and Writings*" p. 90) he says, "His (Lord Krishna) strength entered into me and I was able

which were quite contrary to my own ideas, for they made me see with a stupendous intensity the world as a cinematographic play of vacant forms in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman The final upshot was that he was called upon by a Voice within him to hand me over to the Divine within me enjoining an absolute surrender to Divine will—a principle or rather a seed force to which I kept unswervingly and increasingly till it led me through all the mazes of an incalculable Yogic development bound by no single rule or style or dogma or Shastra to where and what I am now and towards what shall be hereafter Yet he understood so little what he was doing that when he met me a month or two later, he was alarmed tried to undo what he had done and told me that it was not the Divine but the Devil that had got hold of me

We know that Aurobindo had been feeling the strain of his activities. Relief came in a strange way Events so conspired that he was arrested in May 1908 and sent to Alipore jail. He spent about a year there It was not a bed of roses, no jail can be. He had to undergo all possible hardships and the worst hardship for him at that time was the necessity of living with a crowd for months on end. But he faced things as always, with remarkable equanimity What is more he made his jail-life an opportunity for further unbroken Sadhana, welcoming the ordeal as a period of rest from the world when he could live in seclusion When for some time he was forced to live in a dormitory with a number of other inmates he trained his mind to meditate in the midst of all diversions He closed his mind to the court case and was nonchalant. He felt that he would not be found guilty To all other hardships and to creature comforts he was absolutely indifferent. Thus by sheer force of will and through an intense desire to continue his Sadhana without break, he created even in that dreary place an atmosphere congenial to his work. In his case "the mind was its own place and it could make a heaven of hell With this initial

preparation, his Sadhana went on and we know the result. He has described the consummation in his Uttarpara speech delivered after his release. It is a glowing account of the glorious vision of Shri Krishna pervading everything, from each atom of the cosmic dust to the newest star from the first protein molecule which started life to the newest babe born on earth. It was obviously the realization of the cosmic consciousness, of the Divine at once immanent and transcendent. It can be summed up in the pregnant phrase of the Gita, "Vasudevah Sarvam" (all is Vasudeva). It was no longer the unutterable stillness of spaceless and timeless Brahman, nor the mere dance of dynamic creation but it was both in One, the all-pervasive Purushottam, in Whom all meet and find their meaning and synthesis. He had also glimpses of the power higher than the mind which is the link between our consciousness and the Consciousness of the Divine. But more of this later: we must restrict ourselves here to discussing his vision of the immanent Divine while in Alipore jail.

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to do the Sadhana of the Gita In another speech he describes his experience ("*Speeches and Writings*, pp 92 93) thus.

"I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned no, it was Vasudeva who surrounded me I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell, but it was not the tree I knew it was Vasudeva it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me His shade I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. As I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch I felt the arms of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover This was the first use of the deeper vision He gave me. I looked at the prisoners in jail the thieves the murderers, the swindlers and as I looked at them, I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana whom I found in those darkened souls and misused bodies."

He writes in his account of jail life " Day after day He showed me His wonders and made me realize the utter truth of the Hindu Religion I had many doubts before. I was brought up in England amongst foreign ideas and an atmosphere entirely alien But now day after day I realized in the body the truths of the Hindu religion. They became living experiences to me and such things were opened to me which no material science could explain He fully realized that in addition to personal effort the grace of God is an important element in fulfilment Even the Upanishads refer to this kind of grace "Yamevaisha Vranute Tena Labhyah' It is he who is chosen, who gets to know the Reality

One or two small but important incidents while in Alipore jail should be mentioned here since they bear directly on Aurobindo's Sadhana Upendra Bannerjee a co-prisoner once inquired of him where he obtained the oil for his hair It was so dark and shiny that Upendra was sure Aurobindo had been receiving

oil from somewhere! But the shine was the result and effect of his Yogic practices. Another incident refers to the experience of levitation. Once during meditation in his cell, Sri Aurobindo found himself in a very peculiar pose. One point of one knee touched the ground and the whole body balanced on it. It was a position which could not be taken voluntarily however hard one tried. It was only when one of the watchmen discovered him in that pose and went to report the happening to the officers that Aurobindo realized what was happening! By the time the officer arrived, however Aurobindo was in a normal position once more and to all enquiries he responded by a simple laugh.

The important change in his outlook and the deeper note of spirituality after his release from jail, is clearly noticeable in the following lines of his Uttarpara speech. "I spoke once before that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today but I put it another way I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is Sanatana Dharma which for us is nationalism."

The effect of his vision was profound and abiding: it is reflected in his writings and speeches and attitude. It continued until the time of his departure to Chandernagore and later to Pondicherry

The next period lasting about a year covered activities similar to those of previous years but there was now a difference. "Yoga is skill in works" was the motto of Aurobindo s new journal "*Karmayogin*" And what is Karmayoga but "the application of Vedanta and Yoga to life?" At another time he said, Yoga is communion with God for knowledge, for love for work" He now began to urge the whole nation to go into Sadhana in order to revitalize the cultural heritage of India. His emphasis on Brahmacharya and Yoga as the twin means of reaching perfection shows what importance Aurobindo attached to them in

Sadhana His belief in spirituality had become firmer He wrote, "It is the Spirit alone that saves

But he was destined soon to leave the active arena of politics for a more intensely active inner field of the mind, and the planes above it. The basis from which he had been working now proved to be inadequate and he ventured into a struggle to scale new heights and to find fresh foundation for a ' life divine on earth.

CHAPTER X

TOWARDS SUPERMIND

The next phase of Aurobindo s Sadhana begins firstly with a brief month and a half in Chandernagore and then moves to Pondicherry, another French outpost in India at that time It was now more evident than ever that the Government of India intended to pursue Aurobindo, however fruitlessly in an attempt to get rid of him They had already failed once twice, thrice four times! But at the same time, in Aurobindo s mind, the inner call to pursue the path of contemplative Yoga persisted without relaxation. Quitting Calcutta for Chandernagore he soon left for Pondicherry as if he was a directed automaton.

He did not escape to Pondicherry with any predetermination never to return to active politics. On the contrary in reply to an invitation from Chittaranjan Das he wrote "Dear Chitta I would not enter the world of action with my older ideas and inspirations I am in search of a higher goal. When I reach that, I will begin my work with my base there It is clear from this remark that Aurobindo intended to seek a higher base in spirituality before returning to other activities. Exclusive devotion to inner development was the main feature of his earlier Sadhana in Pondicherry The same urge that had led him to Yoga, to the doctrine of complete self-surrender, to the simultaneous practice of Pranayama of contemplation, and of Nishkama

Karma, now urged him to go beyond the mind and try to possess the supramental. He had started his spiritual Sadhana with the intention of obtaining more Brahmatej, more Sattvic moral power and strength for the emancipation of India. That led him to Yoga. He could still the mind, suspend outward activity of the self and look to the inner Spirit as its real abode. He had also surrendered himself completely to the Lord, to the extent of feeling that he moved only at His word. No doubt, he could have rested there as so many had done before. But this would not have meant any advance for humanity beyond the ground already covered. Aurobindo felt that his mission was different. His aim now was to realize the Supermind, to take his stand in the Truth-Consciousness which is the natural and normal poise of the Supermind and then to bring down the Supermind to matter life and mind in order to transform them into finer instruments of divine action on earth. This alone would lead to the birth of a future humanity which would inherit truth-vision, harmony in spirit and action, and ineffable joy

To judge by ordinary standards, vast ground had already been covered by him. But now that he had launched himself upon a far greater adventure, previous achievements seemed to be insignificant and fragmentary. Each stage through which he had passed might well have occupied the lifetime of even a good Yogi. Most would be satisfied to have attained one stage and would feel "Kritartha" that is one who has attained one's aim in life. But with Aurobindo individual solution or salvation was never the aim even in the initial stages of his quest. He was like a poet who would not be satisfied until he had written a mighty epic of the human spirit. He was like a painter who would take the sky as his canvas and the rainbow as his inkpot. He was like an architect who would build a temple where the gods of humanity should dwell. And yet at the beginning all seemed so simple. The curtain rises on a human soul struggling to find the truth. But as the drama unfolds we see an epic

hero battling and grappling with forces, inner and outer, with a view to clearing the way for humanity In essence, his attempt was to cut a clear path of victory and triumph over matter life, and mind for generations yet unborn.

An extract from his Uttarpara speech reads as follows.

' When I approached God at that time I hardly had a living faith in him. The agnostic was in me the atheist was in me, the sceptic was in me and I was not absolutely sure that there was a God at all I did not feel His presence. Yet something drew me to the truth of the Vedas, the truth of the Gita, the truth of the Hindu religion. I felt there must be a mighty truth somewhere in this Yoga, a mighty truth in this religion based on the Vedanta. '

His object, though limited at that time was highly altruistic and not at all personal In the same speech he remarked, "I do not ask for anything that others ask for I ask only for strength to uplift this nation, I ask only to be allowed to live and work for this people whom I love and to whom I pray, that I may devote my life

His struggles were as intense as they were titanic. In another one of his letters to Dilip Kumar Roy (*"Aurobindo came to me*) writes

"But what strange ideas again! that I was born with a supramental temperament and that I know nothing of hard realities! Good God! My whole life has been a struggle with hard realities from hardships starvation in England and constant dangers and fierce difficulties to the far greater difficulties constantly cropping up here in Pondicherry, external and internal. My life has been a battle. the fact that I wage it now from a room upstairs and by spiritual means as well as others that are external makes no difference to its character But of course as we have not been shouting these things, it is natural I suppose for others to think that I am living in an august glamorous, lotus-eating dreamland where no hard facts of life or nature present

themselves. But what an illusion all the same!

From his letter to Chittaranjan Das we saw that Aurobindo's whole former basis of working had, as it were, become out-of-date from his point of view. And now he wanted to work not from the mental but from the supramental plane. Not with the mind, the fumbling stumbling erring instrument that humanity possesses today but with that unerring and directly cognitive instrument the supermind, with which the Divine Itself works.

His intent and purpose was to change the fundamental nature of humanity. The whole meaning and essence of his Pondicherry Sadhana was present in this great endeavour.

Aurobindo's faith in Yoga and its capacity was as profound as his faith in the Divine. It was that faith, together with confirmation through his experiences, which led him on from stage to stage. In his "*Tirthankar*" Dilip Kumar Roy gives an account of an interview with Aurobindo in which he is purported to have said: "*I too wanted at one time to transform through my Yoga* the face of the world. I had wanted to change the fundamental nature and movements of humanity to exile all the evils which affect mortals. It was with this aim and outlook that I turned to Yoga in the beginning and I came to Pondicherry because I had been directed by the Voice to pursue my Yoga here." It is of incidental interest to know that hundreds of years ago, Pondicherry was called Veda-puri and the great Agasthya Rishi lived there as its patron-saint!

During the first four years of his life in Pondicherry Aurobindo worked out his "synthesis of Yoga" and perfected the technique which has come to be known as Purna Yoga or Integral Yoga. Here we find a total view of things and a grand reconciliation of apparent opposites. In discovering an underlying inner harmony within himself and by evolving an integral personality by his strenuous Sadhana, Aurobindo found the key to the harmony and music of the spheres and to the supreme personality the Purushottam the presiding Divinity over the seemingly

conflicting dualities in the cosmos.

He knew however, that individual realization even of the Supermind was not enough to change the whole of humanity at once. Humanity had to be ripe for an all-out effort. But meanwhile, he thought that individuals and groups could carry on the Sadhana. Dilip quotes Aurobindo in his *"Tirthankar"* as saying, "It was then (i.e., after my own Atma-Siddhi) that my outlook changed with the knowledge born of my new Yogic consciousness But then I found, to my utter disillusionment, that it was only my ignorance which had led me to think that the impossible was feasible here and now in order to help humanity out it was not enough for an aspirant however great, to achieve an ultimate solution individually humanity has to be ripe for it too "

There cannot be any doubt that the first four years of Aurobindo's seeming silence were pregnant with intense Sadhana. For after that period there came from him the most eloquent, forceful fruitful and varied writing which has since proved to be a permanent contribution to world literature on philosophy, poetry culture sociology and spiritual technique. His writings in *"Arya"* are not laboured or artificial. They are an expression of much of the inner knowledge accumulated during his Yoga practices. He writes in *"Arya"*, "The spiritual experience and the general truths on which such an attempt can be based were already present to us, otherwise we should have no right to make the endeavour at all but the complete intellectual statement of them. had to be found

"Arya" continued to be published for six and a half years. His writings in it were a continuation of his Sadhana in the intellectual field The relation his political activities had borne to his spiritual Sadhana during 1906-10, was replaced now in 1914-1921 by his intellectual activities. But the field and the plane on which he worked were now different. The field was that of ideas and of thought and the plane was entirely spiritual.

The reader will be wondering what kind of Sadhana and for what purpose Aurobindo continued until the end of his life, when, to all intents and purposes, in the eyes of the general public, and within the knowledge of those who were intimate with him, he had attained the usual Siddhi. Suffice it to say that he was a Siddha in the orthodox sense, but in relation to his goal of bringing down the Supramental, he continued to be a Sadhaka. There is nothing inconsistent in this. Even after he went to Pondicherry there was no stop or respite in his Sadhana. Whether he was in silence, editing "*Arya*" writing to disciples, conducting an Ashram, or composing "*Savitri*" it went on as intensely as ever. The difference was that now he sought a far higher prize in order to effect a more revolutionary change namely the transformation of humanity into a divinized community.

He had already reached what is usually called Atma-Siddhi. But Aurobindo, as a fully evolved soul, as one who was a Siddha and as one who had nothing more to achieve for himself had chosen to make an experiment in the way of consciously trying to help nature expedite the next evolutionary leap that humanity was bound to take. His vision of future humanity was quite clear. He had sighted the Supermind, that is, Truth-Consciousness, the instrumentality through which the Divine acts on the lower planes of consciousness, including the inconscient. He said that the coming of the Superman was as sure now as was the coming of man before he actually came. This leap from the mind to the supermind was as certain as the leap from life to mind. Man would then be transformed because he would no longer be acting in ignorance and through it, but in knowledge and therefore in light, in love, in harmony and in Ananda. Aurobindo saw the possibility at the next stage of humanity of the supermind purifying and divinising the whole content of man, his material, vital and mental being. His Sadhana consisted therefore in hastening that process in himself

and in those that followed him with faith.

It was obvious to Aurobindo that the next stage in human evolution was to be reached not by a mere turning of the magic wand or by a Mantra or a miracle It was a process What could be done by one who had had a vision of it was to proclaim the vision in clear terms to stand witness to the truth of the vision, to give a call to humanity to prepare itself, and finally, to help all souls to respond to the extent that each one was capable. Thus he would participate in the evolutionary process that was going on here and now This almost superhuman effort to usher in the era of supermen on earth primarily took the form of an intensely searching probe into the higher regions and the upper reaches of consciousness. This was a part of the attempt to bring the power of the Supermind to bear on the matter life, and mind of humanity It was an intense search for a more complete experience which would help unite and harmonise the dyad of the Reality, namely Spirit and Matter, Purusha and Prakriti, Being and Becoming through the agency of the supermind Some other ways in which he carried on the work included taking charge of the Sadhana of those that believed in him and had faith in the truth he had discovered, advising them and writing to them, writing books and revising those already written composing the grand epic *"Savitri"*, and giving exclusive devotion to spiritual exercise This indeed was the Sadhana that Aurobindo followed till the last moment of his earthly life

It is interesting to know some of the outward and visible things about him which attracted notice while he carried on his Sadhana during the long years in Pondicherry We know already the way in which he lived while in Baroda and Calcutta We must now see, very briefly, under what conditions and in what environment he conducted his spiritual adventure while in Pondicherry

His moving to French India proved to be extremely wise

The suspicious government of the day would otherwise have been on his track. If nothing else, that would have been a nuisance. Moreover any action the government might or might not have taken would have acted as an artificial restriction on the movements of many persons who wished to visit him and stay with him. All that was avoided by Aurobindo's residence in Pondicherry. His habits as regards food, clothing, sleep, shelter and other creature comforts were always a model of simplicity. As previously observed he remained indifferent to these things. Never a lover of physical exercise, his general health was good and for a time in Baroda he practised the ordinary Indian Danda and Baithak exercises. Later walking on the terrace or in his rooms comprised the only exercise he allowed himself. Sleep or physical and mental rest were entirely within his control and depended upon his particular requirements.

Sri Aurobindo laid the greatest possible stress on Brahmacharya, not only in the highest sense of the term but also in the widest sense. During his political career he had lived with his wife Mrinalini and sister Sarojini for a very brief period in Calcutta, but after his departure to Pondicherry he gave to Mrinalini neither chance nor permission to meet him till the year 1918. When eventually this permission was granted and while on her way to Pondicherry in December of that year the poor brave and loving woman succumbed to influenza in Calcutta.

In one of his letters, Aurobindo says that not only sex-life but also sex thoughts, if allowed to have their way obstruct the course of Sadhana. Sex-energy and life-energy being the same the sex act does diminish it to some extent. Brahmacharya, however does not mean only continence or chastity or physical abstinence from the sex-act. The continence that Brahmacharya contemplates extends to abstinence from thinking and talking about sex. Asexuality apart, Brahmacharya lays down that the Sadhak must abstain from everything that comes in the way of the contemplation of Brahman. This is only the

negative side of Brahmacharya. The positive side is to keep the mind busy and occupied with thoughts about Brahman, the highest truth. Keeping the mind occupied with Brahman consists in listening to what is said about it, thinking about it, understanding it and contemplating about Brahman constantly. One who rigorously practises Brahmacharya and all that it implies, develops Tejas as well as Ojas, physical as well as intellectual and moral brilliance and power. Brahmatejas is the power that develops as a result of the observance of Brahmacharya to the fullest extent. Because of his Brahmacharya, Aurobindo's physical body developed an extraordinary golden shine in later years.

The story of his contact with the outside world, is to say the least, very peculiar and extraordinary. The first four years in Pondicherry were spent in living an ascetical life and are usually termed the "silent years". Then came the "*Arya*" period when he developed contacts enough for running the great journal. After this, his contact for years, even with his closest disciples, was only through the Mother, Mira Richard. After 1926 he receded even further into seclusion. From 1930-38, however there was such an abundance of contact, but only through correspondence that he was sometimes required to work until five o'clock in the morning. When the correspondence period ended, the only link left between him and the world, including his disciples, was the Mother. It was in 1927 that the Darshan system was organised. Four days in a year were set apart and on those days disciples in the Ashram as well as those who came specially for Darshan filed past Aurobindo and the Mother in silence as they both sat on specially prepared Asans (seats). People had to be satisfied with it. Sometimes as on 15th August 1947, the number swelled to 2000. This method of occasional Darshan continued to the end of his life. The last Darshan was on the 24th of November 1950, about 10 days before mahasamadhi.

Coupled with Aurobindo's deliberate seclusion, these facts are likely to give one an impression that he was remote from the

world and that he had ceased to have human and humane considerations. This would be a very mistaken conception of his approach and attitude. In fact, the more remote he was from physical contact, the nearer he was to all who were near and dear to his heart. Humanity itself, however was nearest to him, and his Sadhana was meant for humanity. He has emphasised this point many times. And that is evident in the numerous letters he has written, in their rich emotional content, their courtesy, their humility and the affection which pervades most of them. Nor was he a stranger to humour. It is sometimes obvious in his letters, but it was enjoyed much more by those who had the occasional privilege of being with him. There was a strong trait of shyness and reserve in his temperament. It is also true that he avoided being in crowds, which is one of the characteristics of true knowledge and is one of the important disciplines prescribed by Yogic Sadhana. His studied isolation and seclusion was dictated more by the necessity of Sadhana than by any other consideration. His heart was too tender, his sense of human brotherhood too strong; his identity with the aspirations and destiny of humanity too thick to admit of any feeling of separateness or remoteness, either from those near him or from general humanity.

The reader is likely to have another wrong impression from the seclusion in which he shrouded himself: that Aurobindo had lost touch with the world of human affairs, with the mighty events and happenings outside the Ashram, and with scientific discoveries that were fast making man the master of the material world. His writings and letters however bear witness to the fact that even to the last moment, he did not miss anything of importance. His philosophy strikes us not as one which is out-of-date but as one which takes into consideration the latest thoughts and latest discoveries. His philosophy as well as his Yoga are nothing if they are not integral, coordinated, synthetic, constructive, and in line with the evolutionary trends of

Nature His routine during the last days also shows clearly how alert he was and how he kept himself informed of the world and its multifarious activities.

The following is an extract from an article in "*Mother India*" dated 19th May 1951, written by Dr Nirodbaran who was helping Aurobindo at times in disposing off his routine work. He writes, " Apart from *Savitri* which is a monument by itself, the daily reading of papers, the perusal of numerous journals, weeklies, fortnightlies, quarterlies edited by people connected with the Ashram and of articles written in four or five languages, poems, essays letters, dictation of replies to questions and to crown all, the preparation of his own books, the attention to their manuscripts and proofs, etc.—all this was his routine Add urgent demands from the press blessings invoked while in distress —and the list should be enough to open a blind man's eyes. All this work had to be despatched within about two hours a day!" Aurobindo's whole philosophy and basic approach was catholic and comprehensive· it could never allow any exclusion of what was going on in the world

I shall now revert to the earlier years at Pondicherry and then proceed to the great day of days, the 24th of November 1926.

Aurobindo when going to Chandernagore followed the dictates of his inner voice like a machine. Though the ordeal of travelling incognito to Chandernagore and then to Pondicherry must have been most upsetting he is said to have possessed admirable equanimity, and to have been quite unmindful of the whole process. Somehow he felt that all would be right in the end. This was the result of his complete selfsurrender When absorbed in Sadhana at Chndernagore Moti Lal Roy describes him as "a dedicated soul. When he speaks, one feels that some one else is speaking through him. When food was offered he kept on looking at it and accepted a little, quite mechanically He seemed to have developed the power to meditate all the

time and with open eyes. He witnessed also subtle visions (p. 252 "*Dakshina*" Feb. 1951) In fact, he saw Ila, Bharati, Mahi, Saraswati and other goddesses in a vision and it was they who helped him later in the interpretation of the Rig Veda.

The same process of Sadhana continued at Pondicherry There were some things of note however during the first year of his stay He observed a fast for twentythree days while staying with Shankara Chetty Subsisting on water only his daily routine of walking four hours, reading, writing, and meditation continued without break or diminution. He lost weight but not energy He broke his fast and immediately ate his usual food without any bad effect. The conclusions he drew from this experiment were, that a body cannot live on indefinitely without food, that during long fasts one can draw directly from the atmosphere vitality and energy necessary for spiritual work, and that it is not essential to observe all the meticulous rules regarding breaking a fast. Of course, these conclusions may apply only to Yogis and not to ordinary persons.

During the year he once had a prevision of one V Ramaswami Iyengar who subsequently stayed with him for about a year Long before his arrival, Aurobindo had visualised the visitor but the figure he saw however resembled the person as he looked when he left one year later This story was later narrated to Dilip Kumar Roy

Another happening during the year was the dictation of the book "*Yogic Sadhana*" by the planchette. It is said that at the end of the dictation, the shadow of Raja Ram Mohan Roy passed before the witnesses, indicating that the dictation was by him. But apart from that fact, the strange phenomenon of a sustained effort by a bodyless force resulting in a cogent, logical book, remains!

Though through Moti Lal, friends continued to help financially life in Pondicherry was full of want and hardship. Aurobindo of course, accepted it as part of the bargain and never

complained His birthday in 1912 was observed by the distribution of sweetmeats by friends and disciples who gathered round him. In 1913, it happened that he had fever on his birth day, but still he sat up in his chair and one by one all met him and expressed joy and gratitude.

While his Sadhana continued a very important step was taken in starting "*Arya* on the 15th of August 1914 As we know, the proposal for a journal came from Monsieur Paul and Mira Richard who had been staying there from March of that year Madame Mira first met Aurobindo at 3-30 p.m on the 29th of March at 103, Rue Francois Martin, Pondicherry Aurobindo agreed to the idea because he thought it would be a good vehicle for the exposition of ideas based on his own experiences from 1904-14 He remarked, "It will be the intellectual side of my work for the world' It was also decided to issue a French edition, which, however ceased publication very soon, as the world war broke out.

It is interesting to note how Aurobindo made fun of his capacity to write anything about philosophy He wrote to Dilip "And philosophy! Let me tell you in confidence that I never never never was a philosopher, although I have written philosophy which is another story altogether I knew precious little about philosophy before I did the Yoga and came to Pondicherry—I was a poet and a politician, not a philosopher! How I managed to do it and why? First because Richard proposed to me to cooperate in a philosophical review—and as my theory was that a Yogi ought to be able to turn his hand to anything I could not very well refuse and then he had to go to the war and left me in the lurch with sixty-four pages a month of philosophy all to be written by my lonely self! Secondly, because I had only to write down in the terms of the intellect all that I had observed and come to know in practising Yoga daily, the philosophy was there automatically But that is not being a philosopher! Aurobindo considered that

while philosophy is a quest for the truth of things by the human intellect, the endeavour to realize the truth in the inner self and in outer life, is Dharma. It goes without saying, that he was more a Dharmatma than a mere Darshanik (philosopher) and why Aurobindo, in spite of himself, was both!

Once "*Arya*" was started, Aurobindo saw to it that it was issued regularly and punctually. The Richards had to return to France during the 1914-1918 war until 1920, since when Mira Richard, the Mother has lived in India. After 1920 Aurobindo never moved out of his apartments except when there was a change of residence. Though from 1914 to 1920 he was busy with "*Arya*" and though during that period he received visitors and met a number of people during tea-time, his Sadhana, as he once stated, never suffered.

As proof of the fact that Aurobindo kept himself abreast of the times, it may be mentioned that at an urgent request from Mrs. Annie Besant, he wrote a letter to the English daily "*New India*" in 1918 regarding the Morley-Minto reforms. The condition however was that the letter should be anonymous! So it was signed, "An Indian Nationalist." He characterised the reforms as "A Chinese Puzzle" and "A Great Shadow."

A letter he wrote in January 1920, in reply to one from Joseph Baptista, is noteworthy as it reveals the working of his mind at that time. Aurobindo had been requested by Baptista to re-enter politics and edit a nationalist daily in Bombay. Of course, Lokamanya Tilak was behind the request.

The letter may be summarized as follows:—Your offer is a tempting one but I am sorry I cannot accept it. I must mention my reasons to you in brief. I do not intend to return to British India now. Neither is the British Government, so far as I know in favour of my return. It would probably mean immediate incarceration and I have so much work on hand that I am unwilling to waste my time by becoming a guest of "His Majesty's Hotel". But even if I had full liberty I would not now wish to

return to British India.

I came here with a distinct objective in view. I wanted liberty and peace for that purpose. It has nothing to do with the political situation in the county. What I should do for India I am doing *in my own way. It is not possible for me to start* any other activity until my present objective is fulfilled. If I go back to British India now, I shall have to take part in so many things.

Pondicherry is my place of seclusion. It is my cave for Tapas and Tapas of my own brand and not the usual renunciation. Before I come out I must perfect myself inwardly in the Sadhana that I have undertaken.

I do not look upon politics as inferior nor do I think that I have now outgrown them. I have always emphasised spiritual life and I am doing that much more fully now. But my idea of spirituality is not one which preaches Sannyas and an escape from the world. I do not believe in hatred or disgust for things of this world. There is nothing that is not spiritual in a lesser or higher degree. In a perfect spiritual life there is scope for everything.

What is now being done in the political field seems to differ much from what I would like to do. My sole object during 1903-10 was to create among the people a will to be free and to divert the energies of the Congress from the useless ways that it was following into self reliant and militant channels. That work has now been accomplished and the Amritsar Congress has proved it.

I believe that the country is now on the way to freedom and will achieve it. But sometimes, I think about how it will shape itself after freedom. This is a very important thing.

I believe that India has a soul, has a genius of its own. I generally subscribe to principles of some kind of social democracy, but they should be in tune with the traditions and the culture of India. Very few seem to have clear ideas about this

aspect of the matter

I have no definite programme just at present. I have been thinking about these matters but there has been no clear formation yet. So I am not in a position to give anything concrete to the people.

Similarly Aurobindo's reply to a letter received from his younger brother Barindra K. Ghose after his release from the Andamans, is historic. It is advisable to quote it in full as it throws light on a number of matters which are otherwise not clearly known. The original is in Bengali. The translation runs thus:—

7th April, 1920.

"Dear

"I duly received your letter but it has not been possible for me to reply until now It is something of a miracle that I am now sitting down to write to you, because it is once in a blue moon that it is possible for me to write, specially in Bengali, which happens here but once every five or seven years. But this miracle will be complete only if I am able to finish this letter and post it to you!

"Firstly let me take up the subject of your Yoga. You want to put the responsibility on me. I am certainly willing to take up the burden. This means, however that the burden is to be transferred to the shoulders of God, who either openly or secretly is guiding you and me through Bhagavati Shakti. The inevitable result of this would be that you will have to go by the same path which I am treading and which He has shown me. We now call it Purna Yoga. That with which I began, along with what Lele added, was all during a period of seeking Then I looked into this and that path and tried many things. I probed into the partial Yogas of the past here and there took them up one by one tested and went through the experiences also one by one.

"After I came to Pondicherry this tossing about and un-

steady condition disappeared The Jagat Guru (the World Teacher) who dwells in my heart, showed me His path in full The complete theory of this Yoga is that it has ten stages. I have been trying to develop it fully for the last ten years by going through experiences. The development is not yet complete. It may be added that I shall require two more years.

"I shall write to you later as to the special nature of this Yoga. Or if you come here we shall talk about it In such matters talking to each other is preferable to writing Here and now I can but inform you that the main principle consists in taking up the thorough synthesis and the integral unity of full knowledge full action and full devotion beyond the level of the mind, to the level of the supermind and to perfect them there. The main defect in the old Yogas consisted in the fact that they knew mind and intelligence and the Atman they used to be satisfied with spiritual experience on the mental level but the mind is capable of only partial knowledge and it can comprehend only part, not the whole The infinite and the integral truth cannot be fully grasped by the mind The mind can know the infinite and the total reality only through Samadhi Moksha, or Nirvana and by no other means. Of course some people do attain this kind of Moksha, which may be said to be a blind alley But then what is the use of it? Brahman Atman Bhagavan are there and exist in their own right But what the Bhagavan intends to do with man is to enable him to realize God in life, in the individual as well as in the collective society (to manifest God in life)

"The old system of Yoga could not bring about a synthesis or unity between spirituality and life they disposed of the world calling it Maya or the transitory play of the Lord The result is that vitality and vigour in life have been sapped and India has decayed. In the Gita it has been said "If I (Shri Krishna) cease doing action, these worlds would be destroyed So has it happened and 'this world so far as India is concerned has been

really destroyed. Some Sannyasis and Bairagis, Sadhus and Siddhas would, not doubt, attain spiritual perfection and be 'free' Some devotees, out of love for the Lord and through extreme emotion, may dance on account of overwhelming joy but the whole race would continue to be devitalized and be without any real understanding. People would all be drowned in Tamas (sloth and darkness). What kind of spiritual salvation is this ? One has first to go through the partial experiences on the level of the mind and then having spiritualised the mind and illuminated it by the light of the spirit, one has to elevate it upwards. It is impossible for a man to understand the ultimate secret of this creation unless one enters the supermind. Nor can the problem of the world be solved unless and until this is done. It is only there on the supramental level that ignorance about the duality of spirit and matter can be dispelled. At that stage, the world does not any longer present itself as Maya but it appears as the eternal play of Bhagavan, and one visualizes the progress of the soul from day to day. It is only then that one can have full knowledge of Bhagavan and can attain Him. This has been referred to in the Gita as 'knowing me fully and totally'. The material body, life, mind-intellect, supermind, and Ananda are the five sheaths or planes (Koshas) or dimensions of the Atman. The higher a man rises, the nearer he approaches the highest point of attainment (Siddhi) in spiritual evolution. When one enters the supermind, the transition to Ananda is easy. Then one becomes established in the poise of infinite bliss, not merely in the Parabrahman who is beyond time and space, but in this body, in life and in this terrestrial world. Existence-Consciousness-Bliss fully blossom forth and illumine this life. This effort is the central clue to my Yoga system.

"This is by no means an easy thing. Even after fifteen years of strenuous labour I have but reached the lowest of the three stages of the supermind and am trying hard to draw into it all the lower tendencies in me. But when once this is fully accom-

steady condition disappeared. The Jagat Guru (the World Teacher) who dwells in my heart, showed me His path in full The complete theory of this Yoga is that it has ten stages. I have been trying to develop it fully for the last ten years by going through experiences The development is not yet complete. It may be added that I shall require two more years.

"I shall write to you later as to the special nature of this Yoga. Or if you come here, we shall talk about it. In such matters talking to each other is preferable to writing Here and now I can but inform you that the main principle consists in taking up the thorough synthesis and the integral unity of full knowledge full action, and full devotion beyond the level of the mind, to the level of the supermind, and to perfect them there. The main defect in the old Yogas consisted in the fact that they knew mind and intelligence and the Atman they used to be satisfied with spiritual experience on the mental level but the mind is capable of only partial knowledge and it can comprehend only part, not the whole. The infinite and the integral truth cannot be fully grasped by the mind The mind can know the infinite and the total reality only through Samadhi, Moksha, or Nirvana and by no other means. Of course, some people do attain this kind of Moksha, which may be said to be a blind alley But then what is the use of it? Brahman Atman Bhagavan are there and exist in their own right But what the Bhagavan intends to do with man is to enable him to realize God in life in the individual as well as in the collective society (to manifest God in life)

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the knots would be no more This is all a sign of imperfection, of immaturity I am not going to be disturbed by all that. Let spirituality have full play in the land, in whatever forms and in whatever number of groups. One can take care of them later This is the infancy of the new age or one can even characterise it as the embryonic stage It is yet but a sign of it and not even the beginning

"One of the peculiarities of this Yoga is that unless it progresses somewhat, even the foundation does not become firm. Those who are following my Yoga and doing Sadhana had a number of old Samskaras (impressions). Some of course, have disappeared, but some are still there. You all had the Samskara of Sannyas and you had thought of establishing an Aurobindo Math. Now you have come to the conclusion that Sannyas is not the thing required. But the old impression has not yet left your vital being That is why you are speaking in terms of living a wordly life with Tyaga (renunciation) added on. You have realized that you should renounce desires but you have not yet grasped fully and realized the synthesis between renunciation and enjoyment. You had taken up my Yoga quite well but that was just in the way Bengalis do, *i.e.*, not so much through understanding and knowledge as through devotion and the way of action. There are traces of knowledge too, but much yet remains to be understood. The shell of emotionalism is not yet dissolved, not yet destroyed. You have not overcome self-righteousness. The ego still persists. I can, however say with some solace that there is no further development in that direction. I too am not in a hurry I am allowing you to develop according to your nature. I do not want regimentation and dead uniformity The main thing would be the same in all, but it will manifest itself in various ways and numerous forms. All are growing from inside and are being moulded. I do not wish to mould from outside. You have the essence, all else will follow later I do not wish to build any society based on differences.

plished, Bhagavan would give through me success to others in reaching the supermind with very little effort. I have no doubt about it in my mind. It is then that my real work would begin. I am not impatient about the completion and success of my task. Whatever is destined will happen through Bhagavan at the appointed time I am not inclined to jump into the field of action in haste like a madman with the poor vanity of an egotist Even if success does not crown these efforts, I am not going to lose heart. This is not my work at all it is Bhagavan's. I am not going to listen to any other call. When Bhagavan sends me into action, I shall certainly go.

"I know that Bengal is not yet fully prepared. The flood of spirituality that seems to be sweeping is, to a great extent, the old thing in a new form. It is not real transformation Of course, this too was needed Bengal is reviving all the old Yogas and is exhausting their momentum. It is trying to gather the essence and to fertilize the ground First came the turn of Vedanta, Adwaita Sannyas, Shankara's, Mayavada, etc. Now it seems the vogue is Vaishnavism—Lila, love, and ecstasy in emotional devotion. This is all very very old. This is not useful for the new age This would not endure. This kind of thing is not worthy of survival. Of course there is one virtue in Vaishnavism. It keeps up the relationship between Bhagavan and the world. It gives meaning to life But since this is but a partial emotion, it does not develop integral relationship or full significance The sectarian spirit that you have observed is in the circumstances, inevitable It is the very nature of mind to take up a part and call it whole and to exclude all other parts. Those Siddhas who preach a particular path, retain something of their vision of the totality though they are not wholly able to give it a concrete form But their disciples have none of that vision at all, since it has not fully developed into a concrete form in the Guru himself It does not matter if some knots are being tied. The day on which Bhagavan appears in full form in the country,

in the politics of the British brand. If that had not been done, the country would not have awakened. We would not have had the opportunity of gaining experience and our development would not have been complete. It is even now necessary more so in provinces other than Bengal. But I think the time has come when, instead of chasing shadows, we should get hold of the essence. The real Soul of India should be aroused and all action ought to be done according to the genius of this country

"Nowadays, people wish to spiritualize politics. some results may follow If at all there are any permanent results, a kind of Indianized Bolshevism may make its appearance. I have no objection even to that kind of work being taken up. Each one should act according to his inspiration. But I must say that this is not the real stuff. To try to infuse spiritual power into impure forms is like filling an unbaked earthen pot with water The result will be that the pot would give way and the water would be spilled all over or spiritual power would evaporate and the impure and imperfect form would remain what it was. This is the state of things in all fields.

"I can mix with all kinds of people, but that would be only for bringing all to the right path, and without in the least, affecting the spirit of my ideal. If this care is not taken, I shall lose my foothold, neither would the real end be achieved. By trying to identify myself with all, even individually I should be able to achieve something, no doubt. But the results would be hundredfold if done through a Sangh. But the time is not yet for all that. If I try to hasten the process of giving shape, that which I exactly want to happen, would not come about. In the beginning, there would be a kind of form given to the Sangh. Those who have attained the ideal, would work in unison in several places. Then later the Sangh would assume the form of a spiritual commune and it could try to give shape and form to all activities according to the spirit and the times. It will not be a form which is rigid and given by compulsion. It would not

I would like to have a group (Sangh) founded on the unity of the spirit, (Atmapratishtha) or one which is the very embodiment of the oneness of Spirit. It is because of this idea, that the name Deva Sangh has been used. The Sangh of those people who wish to live 'a life divine is called Deva Sangh. Such a Sangh has to be established first in one place and then it has to spread out in the country If after all this effort, egoism asserts itself, the Sangh will deteriorate into a sect. It may easily be imagined that it is this kind of Sangh that will be a pure Sangh of people living a divine life. This would be the centre and all else would be the circumference But there might be those who are outside this circle since they do not subscribe to this idea. Or they may be said to be within the circle but misled because they do not see eye to eye with us.

"Perhaps you may ask as to why there should be a Sangh at all. You may suggest that I should be a Mukta (free man) and be in every one, be one with all and in that mighty oneness and homogeneity allow the evolution that is to take place. This suggestion is all right so far as it goes but that is only one of the ways in which Truth works. I am not concerned only with the formless Atman, I have to see that life too is directed properly Without some kind of form, life's working and movement does not seem to be effective. The fact that the Formless has assumed form, it has manifested itself in name and form is not merely Maya or a capricious whim. Manifestation of the Spirit through form has some profound purpose. I do not wish to abandon or neglect any of the activities of life namely politics commerce, society poetry, architecture sculpture, literature etc. All these must be there. But they will have to be revitalized and given fresh forms

"Why have I abstained from politics just at present? That is only because it is not the real life and Soul of India. Because of the British rule here there is imitation of its pattern of life Of course there was necessity for this also I too have indulged

However whatever the support or want of it, if one is touched by the Bhagavan but once, and if the spirit is once aroused, then the difference between big and small is of no consequence. Sometimes, there might be more difficulties, in some cases more time may be required, there might be differences in attainment, but all that is not very important. The God inside overcomes all difficulties without caring for defects and takes the person up. Had I no defects? Had I no difficulties arising out of the mind, the Chitta, the vital being and the material body? Did I not require enough time? Has Bhagavan shown any mercy in hammering me hard? Day by day almost every moment, I am becoming god, or I do not know what I am becoming! But this is certain that I have become something which I was not, or I am now in the process of becoming. For me it is enough that Bhagavan wants to mould me. It is the same with all others. It is not our shakti but the Shakti of Bhagavan that is trying to bring success to this Yoga.

"I wish to say here in brief one or two things regarding certain matters which I have been observing for many years past. I am of opinion that the main cause of the weakness of India is not slavery is not poverty is not the want of spirituality or religion, but the decay of the capacity to think and concentrate. The result is that there is today the reign of ignorance in this Land of Knowledge. Everywhere I see that there is inability or unwillingness to think. One might as well say that there is 'thinkophobia'. Whatever might have been the case in medieval times, today this is the cause of our great fall. Medieval times were the dark centuries, the days of the triumph of ignorance. Modern times are the age of the triumph of knowledge. He who thinks more, he who dives deep into the secrets of nature and makes them his own, adds to his strength in that proportion. If you have a look at Europe, you will see two things prominently: a vast ocean of thought and the grand play of a mighty flood of power in harness. The whole of the strength

be inelastic It would be one full of freedom and one which would spread like the waters of the ocean. It would have the capacity to enter everywhere and surround all and convert all This process would lead to the formation of a spiritual community This is my present idea. But it is not yet fully developed. All is in the hands of Bhagavan Let Him get things done as He likes.

"Now I shall deal with some of the special points in your letter I do not wish to write much about the points you have referred to in connection with my Yoga. It would be better to discuss them when we meet. The path of Sannyas that preaches Nirvana or complete renunciation lays the greatest stress on looking upon the body as a corpse. I do not think that worldly activities can be carried on with such an attitude towards the body One must be able to find Ananda in everything—in body as in spirit. The body is full of consciousness It is a manifestation of God If one sees Bhagavan in everything in this world, if one realizes that all this is Brahman everything is Vasudeva one enjoys universal bliss. Even in this body one experiences the wave of that bliss When one attains this poise one can carry on worldly affairs, marry and do all one's duties with a spiritual attitude One visualizes then the joyful manifestation of Bhagavan in all actions For a long time I have been trying to transform all my experiences and all the objects of the senses into joy All that stuff now is assuming the form of supramental joy It is in this condition of the consciousness that man realizes the full vision and experience of Sachchidananda

"While writing about the Deva Sangh you have said that I am not a god, I am but iron which has been hammered and polished and sharpened There is no one who is a god but each one enshrines God The ideal and the attempt of divine life is to make manifest that God in man. This is within the capacity of all. This theory has full support in fact I do not look upon what you have written about yourself as very accurate

However whatever the support or want of it, if one is touched by the Bhagavan but once, and if the spirit is once aroused, then the difference between big and small is of no consequence. Sometimes, there might be more difficulties, in some cases more time may be required, there might be differences in attainment, but all that is not very important. The God inside overcomes all difficulties without caring for defects and takes the person up. Had I no defects? Had I no difficulties arising out of the mind, the Chitta, the vital being and the material body? Did I not require enough time? Has Bhagavan shown any mercy in hammering me hard? Day by day almost every moment, I am becoming god, or I do not know what I am becoming! But this is certain that I have become something which I was not, or I am now in the process of becoming. For me, it is enough that Bhagavan wants to mould me. It is the same with all others. It is not our shakti but the Shakti of Bhagavan that is trying to bring success to this Yoga.

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of Europe consists in this. It is with this power that Europe is conquering the whole world. The Europeans of today are like the Tapaswis of old whose power made even the gods tremble with fear and made them serve People say that Europe is running to destruction. I do not subscribe to that view The revolution that is on, these fundamental changes that are taking place are the beginnings of a new world.

'Now have a look at India, Bharat. But for a few men of genius here and there. everywhere you find the utterly aver age man who does not wish to think, who has not the capacity to think, who has no shakti, and who has only a bit of temporary enthusiasm. India seems to be satisfied with simple thoughts, simple things. Europe wants deep thoughts, deep things. There even the ordinary porter thinks: wishes to know everything He is not satisfied only with wide information but he wants to go deeper and know more But the difference how ever, is that there is a fatal limitation to the thinking of Europeans. In the field of spirituality their capacity to think seems to be too poor In that field, they see only confusion, what they call nebulous metaphysics, Yogic hallucination. They rub their eyes in despair and see nothing clearly and come to no firm conclusions. But even in this field, there is a great attempt in Europe to surmount the limitation. We have retained spirit uality on account of the greatness of our ancestors. Those amongst us who have this secret have such knowledge and power at hand that they have the capacity to blow to pieces the whole might of Europe. But what is required is the Upasana (devoted Sadhana) of Shakti in order to possess it. But we are not worshippers of Shakti,we are devotees of simple equanimity We cannot have Shakti out of it. Our ancestors swam in the mighty ocean of *thought*, dived into it and acquired vast knowledge and raised a monumental structure of a great civilization. While they were thus proceeding possibly they felt fatigued and exhausted. Consequently the march of thought became slower and along with it,

Shakti also declined. Our culture has become static, we are worshippers today of form in religion, our spirituality has dwindled to a weak ideal or a momentary wave of enthusiasm. So long as this condition persists, it is difficult for India to rise steadily on any permanent basis.

"In Bengal itself we see the lowest point reached in this matter. The Bengali is quick to grasp, he has the power of emotion, he has intuition. It is these things that give him a prominent place in India. All these qualifications are necessary but they alone are not enough. Along with these, if there is an accession of deep thought, bold Shakti, adventure worthy of a hero, the capacity to take pains and enjoy it, he would acquire the capacity to lead not only India but the whole world. But the Bengali does not seem to have that ambition. He wants things more easily, knowledge without thinking, results without industry, Siddhi without much Sadhana. This ends in emotionalism. Excess of emotion without knowledge is the very characteristic of this disease. The consequence is exhaustion and the spread of Tamas (darkness and inertia). There was a gradual fall of the people and their vitality became lower; and what has happened to the Bengali in his own province? There is not sufficient food to eat, no cloth to wear, there is panic everywhere. All wealth, commerce and industry, land and property, even agricultural holdings are passing into the hands of others. We have abandoned conserving and acquiring Shakti and Shakti has left us. We are carrying on the Sadhana of love, but in the absence of knowledge and Shakti, even love would not be able to survive. Narrowness and meanness begin to advance and make their home in our minds. In a mind and heart that is mean and narrow love cannot survive for a moment. Where is love in Bengal? Nowhere else in India, though torn by differences and disputes, do we find so much of conflict, impurity of mind, jealousy, disgust, hatred, party factions as in Bengal.

"There never was so much of turmoil and hullabaloo in the

epic age of the Aryans. Whatever work they took up and started lasted for centuries. The efforts of the Bengalis seem to last only for a few days.

"You say that it is necessary to fill the country with emotional feelings, to make it go mad after certain things. I did all that in the political field. What was done in the days of the Swadeshi movement has all gone into dust Do you think that in the field of spirituality the result would be better? I do not however mean that there has been no effect at all. There has been some result every movement does have some effect. But that is only an addition to the general possibility of things. This is not the right method of actualizing an ideal. It is because of this that I do not want to base anything on emotional excitement or on making the mind go after something as if it were mad For the firm establishment of my Yoga I wish to have vast, heroic equanimity when consciousness is founded on that equanimity, I would like to have full, firm, and immovable Shakti or power in that ocean of power I want the spread of the rays of the sun of knowledge in that vastness of light there should be infinite love joy, and the ecstasy of unitive experience. I do not desire to have lacs of disciples. I am fully satisfied even if I get but only a hundred who are perfect men, free from mean egotism and ready and willing to work as instruments of Bhagavan I do not believe in the present type of Gurudom. I do not wish to be a Guru myself. If one is able to awaken the sleeping divine in himself if one enters the life of a real devotee of Bhagavan, that satisfies me completely I do not mind whether he is awakened by my touch or by the touch of somebody else It is only such people that would be able to raise this country

"You should not infer from the 'lecture I have given here that I am pessimistic about the future of Bengal There are people who believe that this time the Great Flame would blaze forth in Bengal. I too hope for the same But I have tried to see the other side of the shield also, I mean the defects and the

failings. If these continue the Great Flame that we wish to see shining in Bengal would neither be pre-eminent nor be steady

"The substance of this unusually long letter is that I too am getting ready with my bag. I believe that like the bag of St. Peter it is full of all the game that I have hunted. I am not opening the bag just now by opening it at a time which is not opportune, the play would be spoiled. Neither shall I go to my country just now not because the country is not ready but because I am not ready What can an imperfect man do in the midst of imperfect men.

Yours, "

This reply to Barindra Kumar's letter is an exhaustive one. It clearly reflects Aurobindo's mind in April 1920. His remarks regarding his own Sadhana, especially in connection with Supermind are extremely revealing. They throw very important light on that aspect of his Sadhana. Barindra later went to Pondicherry stayed there occasionally and took instructions from his brother for future work.

One peculiar incident happened in 1920 in the house at that time occupied by Aurobindo and Mother It is worth mentioning because it has something to do with occult powers.

Vattel was a cook at Aurobindo's. He was dismissed from service. Before going away he cursed all and threatened that he would make it difficult for people to live in the house. With the help of somebody who knew black magic or witchcraft (Jarana-marana Vidya) he started some mischief. Stones, big and small, began to fall in different rooms. They did not, however hurt anybody This went on for about a week when at last it was found that a certain boy in the house had been made the medium. Mother drove away the boy and thus turned back the mischief. Immediately the dismissed servant became very ill and his wife on her knees implored Aurobindo to save her husband. And Aurobindo, in the largeness of his heart, forgave the man

and sent the woman away

Among witnesses to this happening were Aurobindo and his brother Barindra, Upendra Bannerjee, Rishikesh Kanjilal, Bejoy Kumar Nag, Satyen and Amrita.

Aurobindo was never very fond of collective meditation but somehow it developed out of the afternoon chatting hour at about 4.30 p.m. when he sat in the midst of visitors. This was in 1921 Sometimes such meditation was discontinued and then again taken up. He thought that it was necessary to have the right atmosphere for such a thing That could be only if there was a personality whose presence could induce such an atmosphere. It could not be done by artificial means or machine like discipline.

Every conceivable topic came up in turn for discussion at the afternoon sittings. The 15th of August 1923 was observed as usual and Aurobindo spoke about the Supermind.

It is obvious that at this time Aurobindo was very busy with his Sadhana in connection with the Supermind On the 24th of November 1926 he was assured of the Supramental Truth and the certainty of its descent Therefore, whatever he said and thought, about the Supermind during the years 1923-26 is of great importance It will serve our purpose very well if I summarize here the material available on this subject during that period

From January 1924 Aurobindo was increasingly reluctant to engage himself in anything that necessitated his coming "down from the level on which he meditated. On 26th March 1924 he remarked, "Sadhana on these lines (Supermind) was not carried on in the past. Whatever was done, was more in the nature of preparation. Even if someone has tried in the past, no traditions have been traceable. Time has wiped out all signs of it. '(P 107 "*Dakshina*)

On this, someone asked, "Might it not be that there was a descent of the Supermind in the past but it went up again to its

original status?" In reply Aurobindo said, "If at all there was the Avatar it was more in the nature of a promise or hope for the future perfection of mankind. But the higher Truth has never appeared in gross matter. The utmost that can be said is that there were attempts to bring it down. But it was never made an effective force on this earth. There is no difficulty in bringing down the Light and the Truth on planes higher than that of matter. But there is real difficulty in bringing the Truth down to the level of the gross inconscience. For that purpose, nature will have to change some of her present laws. There must first be a change in the atmosphere. It is not a question of having knowledge or power but of actually bringing down the Truth in this gross matter." (P 107 "*Dakshina*")

When asked whether it was possible to bring down the Supramental, in the immediate future, he said that there was every possibility but that he could not predict when it would happen. It was true that it had not happened yet.

On the 15th of August 1926, his fifty-fourth birthday he made a short speech which is very important.

Its importance lies in the fact that the 24th of November of the same year was, according to Aurobindo, to be the day of victory when he would be assured of the descent of the Supermind to the earth. What he said on the 15th of August has, therefore, added significance.

The following is an extract from that speech delivered at the Ashram. (P 3, "*Mother India*" Feb. 1952) —

"The object of our Yoga is the bringing down of a Consciousness, a Power a Light, a Reality that is other than the consciousness which satisfies the ordinary being upon the earth—a Consciousness, a Power and a Light of Truth, a divine Reality which is destined to raise the earth-consciousness and transform everything here.

"Remember that the final objects of other Yogas are for us only the first stages or first conditions. In the former days of

Yoga, men were content if they could feel the Brahmic Consciousness or the Cosmic Consciousness or some descent of Light and Power, some intimations of the Infinite It was thought sufficient if the mind got certain spiritual experiences and if the vital being was in contact with the mind. They sought for a static condition and considered that as the goal and release as the final aim.

"To realize this, to be open to the infinite and universal Power to receive its intimations and to have experiences, to go completely beyond the ego to realize the Universal Mind, the *Universal Soul, the Universal Spirit—that is only the first condition.*

"We have to call down this greater Consciousness directly into the vital being and the physical being, so that the supreme calm and universality may be there in all its fullness from top to bottom. If this cannot be done then the first condition of transformation is not fulfilled.

"The mind cannot be transformed unless the vital being is transformed And if the vital being is not transformed, then nothing can be realized because it is the vital being that realizes

"The whole change of the vital being cannot be effected unless the physical being also is open and changed, for the divine vital cannot realize itself in an unfitting environmental life

"And it is not possible for the inner physical being to be changed if the external being the external man is not transformed In the process of Yoga there is a whole totality and each part depends upon the other Therefore to stop short may be a preparation for another life but it is not the victory

"All has to be changed before anything can be changed permanently

After reading this extract, it will be helpful if the reader refers to certain statements regarding Aurobindo's Sadhana of the Supermind in his reply to Barindra's letter in 1920 By

1926, he had advanced far on the road. Mother's presence and her co-operation in many matters had relieved him to a great extent of direct responsibility. Even in the matter of guidance to Sadhaks, Mother had been given more and more responsibility. It was done in a very gradual manner and seemed quite natural. The talks of Aurobindo from August 15th to November that year had been full of references to the Supermind and its descent. This had created an impression that the descent was near and that in spite of difficulties, Aurobindo was progressing. The Sadhaks had in their own individual Sadhana experienced a certain seriousness. They all felt that Siddhi of the Supramental was nearer. Aurobindo went less and less to the evening meetings and it became evident that he was very busy and quite absorbed. Very few can have any idea of the amount of faith, concentration and application which he brought to his Sadhana even at that advanced stage. It was with the faith and determination of a modern scientist engaged on some abstract problem, with the persistence and patience of some great artist bent on perfection, that Aurobindo continued the pursuit of the vision which, when concrete, would bring blessedness to humanity.

At last the day dawned suddenly at 5 p.m. Mother sent an urgent message to all Sadhaks to assemble. By 6-30 p.m. they were all there. Aurobindo was to occupy the chair behind which was a dark curtain embroidered in gold with three Chinese dragons. As the inmates assembled, a deep silence spread and all felt an electric presence in the atmosphere. At the appointed time, Mother and Aurobindo arrived. He sat in his usual chair, the Mother by his side on a stool. There was a soundless silence. In that tense atmosphere meditation continued for forty-five minutes. Then Aurobindo blessed each Sadhak. Everyone felt that there had been some descent of a higher power on earth. In an inspired tone Miss Hudson Dutt exclaimed, "Today has the Divine descended on earth." It was a

triumphant day for Aurobindo's Sadhana, for by the descent of the Overmind, the descent of the Supermind had been assured. Henceforward this day was observed as one of the Darshan days. Aurobindo ceased to see people and contact could be made with him only through the Mother. The whole Ashram was from now on directly supervised by the Mother.

After November 1926, work continued to develop further. The number of Ashramites increased till it reached about 800. The children of the inmates began to be admitted after 1940. The main work consisted in his own continued effort to bring down the Supermind in giving guidance to Sadhaks, running the Ashram and the publication of books ("The Life Divine" was finally revised in 1939) composing and revising "Savitri" and so on. The latest addition to the Ashram responsibilities was the provision of an all-sided education for the children. It was in the midst of all this work that the end came though fortunately, by that time the work of publications had fairly advanced. The Mahayogi left his mortal body while wholly in harness. It was consistent however with his creed of eternal activity on all possible planes of existence.

In one of his letters to Dilip Kumar Roy he is quite clear on this important point. He says "... My own life and my Yoga have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are I suppose this worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some like politics into my life but at the same time since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder Bombay I began to have spiritual experiences. These were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it such as the feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and effect from them upon the material plane so I could make no

sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me, all is Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere. Every one has the right to throw away this-worldliness and choose other-worldliness only and if he finds peace by that choice, he is greatly blessed. I, personally have not found it necessary to do this in order to have peace. In my Yoga also, I found myself moved to include both worlds in my view—the spiritual and the material—and to try to establish the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Power in men's hearts and earthly life, not for a personal salvation only but for a Divine life here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any and the fact of its taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality or alter its Indian character. This at least has always been my view and experience of the reality, the nature of the world and things, and the Divine: it seemed to me as nearly as possible the integral truth about them and I have therefore spoken of the pursuit of it, as the Integral Yoga. Every one is, of course, free to reject and disbelieve in this kind of integrality or to believe in the spiritual necessity of an entire other-worldliness altogether but that would make the exercise of my Yoga impossible."

It is truly said that the mystics of the world speak the same language. It is equally true that spirituality aims at the same end, namely divinising life and human consciousness, both individual and collective. The intellectual presentation and the interpretation of experience, however, as well as the means, the manner and method of attaining the end vary from time to time and from place to place. They often vary even in the case of the same person at different times during his life. But the essence in all cases is the inner experience, indelible experience of the whole Being-Becoming. Other things are subordinate. In the case of Sadhana, since it aims at lifting the human soul from its present condition to a stage of perfection, the direction of

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In one of his letters to Dilip Kumar Roy he is quite clear on this important point. He says, ' My own life and my Yoga have always been, since my coming to India both this-worldly and other worldly without any exclusiveness on either side All human interests are, I suppose this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics into my life but at the same time since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder, Bombay I began to have spiritual experiences. These were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it such as the feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time, I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and effect from them upon the material plane so, I could make no

less, the life of a Yogi, of one who would work in such a way that it would help the onward march of his soul towards the divine goal destined for all. He did not side with Sannyas. He never wore ochre robes neither did he prescribe them for others. Aurobindo's own Sadhana was of a stricter type and one which made extraordinary demands on his mental, moral and spiritual powers. But the Sadhana of his disciples and the inmates of the Ashram was and is, consistent with the main principles of Yoga, and in accordance with individual inclination, capacity and immediate need. A brief description of the Ashram life will give the reader an idea of the life Aurobindo planned for his followers.

The way in which the Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry is run and the manner in which some hundreds of devotees live there, is a clear refutation of the usual association in our minds of Ashram with physical renunciation and austerities. The inmates do not wear ochre garb or any other particular uniform, nor do they practise asceticism. But all the same, life there is based on spiritual discipline and the one end ardently sought after through everything thought, spoken, and done is the attainment of the "life divine" while living this terrestrial life. To put it in the simplest words, the aim is for a higher life, higher than the material, vital, and mental life in which most of us are today entangled. One's religion, caste or creed, sex or age language or province country or region is neither a qualification nor a disqualification for entry. All that is required is a working faith in the possibility of a "life divine" and its attainment by Integral Yoga. Religious or any other conversion is not required since the one aim of the Sadhak is to achieve an inner self-development which will lead in the course of time to the discovery of the One Universal Self and of the higher consciousness, characteristic of the Supermind. This would transform the human being's life and ultimately result in divinizing humanity. Each inmate of the Ashram follows the general phy

progress has to be always towards that ideal. No Sadhana deserves the name, if it leads to a status which is lower than that at present enjoyed 'Sadhananam Anekata', the multiplicity of Sadhana, has been conceded by all schools of thought. But if the followers of any one school claim that their Sadhana is better and the only one or that, that of others is inferior, it comes dangerously near to fanaticism Shri Ramakrishna, who is credited with having practised many types of Sadhana summed up this matter in a few pregnant words, "Jata Mata Tata Patha", there are as many paths as there are schools of thought. The Mahimna Stotra similarly refers to the variety of paths and accounts for them by reason of difference in taste (Rucheenam Vaichitryat) Aurobindo once remarked that the aim can also be achieved by mechanical means (Hatha Yoga) or by Tapasya, but in any case he added, grace is necessary He thought in terms of easier, quicker, or more suitable paths but never in terms of exclusive or superior or inferior paths.

One need not therefore be baffled by the oneness of aim and the multiplicity of paths.

A sufficiently clear picture has, I hope, been given of the internal equipment of a Sadhak of Integral Yoga. Let us now see if we can have some idea of the attitude adopted at the Ashram and how it is run. That will give a fair idea of the life that the Sadhaks actually lead today

However strict in matters of sex, and however sparing and scrupulous with regard to food and other physical comforts, Aurobindo could not be called an ascetic in the accepted sense of the word He did not believe in austerities and severities and enforced observances of a mechanical discipline. In his scheme of things, even matter was a manifestation and form of the Divine, and therefore an object of love and respect. He did not advocate repudiation of life mechanical renunciation, or escape into a forest. In fact, he was against all escapism and other worldliness. He wanted a full-blooded life but neverthe-

and cursed with psychical limitation and littleness. Sadhana liberates the soul from all this by helping it to discover its true nature and by disengaging it from the world of senses. The way is then clear for its identification with the Brahman or the Spirit which is described as Sachchidananda. When once the soul is in possession of true knowledge it progressively frees itself from bondage by rising above attachment, which is the root-cause of all sorrow and slavery. He who has attained Siddhi continues his normal life and duties but he does so without attachment. It is no longer the ego that acts but the Spirit itself does so through the human being. So the free soul becomes a witness of what goes on, without being in the least affected by the body. It enjoys its birthright of being one with the Brahman. This is Siddhi according to the Vedanta.

Siddhi, when once attained, is made a constant possession only by further practice. This can well be compared with what is true of self-realization or Atma-Sakshatkar. In fact, Siddhi is the result of self-realization. After long Sadhana or as a matter of grace or on account of both, an aspirant may have a flash of self-realization. This first flash destroys all doubt, confirms one's faith, and ensures success. But it must become a possession, an integral part of the consciousness, a part of one's very being before it bears full fruit. Once Siddhi becomes permanent and constant, a kind of dual consciousness is established in the person. The Siddha Purusha, the person who has attained spiritual perfection, is then constantly aware of his oneness with the Spirit while he looks on the physical, mental, and other activities of his outer self without losing his spiritual poise. This state is that of an Atma-Sakshi, a self-witness. But it is also possible that the Siddha may prefer to be self-absorbed and have no inclination to continue outside activities. In such a case, there would be no necessity for dual consciousness. But, as it is open to the Siddha to be either self-absorbed or active, his capacity to have dual consciousness is still there. Some of the Upanishads, and

tical psychological, and ethical practices which go by the name of Yoga together with concentration and meditation according to his own need. The aim, however, is not individual salvation or an escape from life's problems. The attempt is to reach and invoke the Divine to divinize the matter, life, and mind of the Sadhak and also of humanity

Thus the Sadhana that Aurobindo has evolved is rightly designated as Integral Yoga. It is Integral not only in the sense of being total and comprehensive, but also in that it has co-ordinated and synthesised the most dynamic and permanent aspects of the Yoga and other systems of Sadhana. The occult and other aspects have been slurred over and the predominantly spiritual aspect is emphasized. It is explained in modern terms so that people can comprehend it better It has been reduced to a science, but its technique raised to the level of a fine art. Above all, it has been sought to make it an instrument for a social purpose, not in the narrow sense, but in the sense of attempting to divinize the whole of humanity itself.

Now let us proceed to Aurobindo's Siddhi, its nature, its meaning, and its significance for humanity

CHAPTER XI

SIDDHI

SIDDHI is final attainment, reaching a point of perfection, fulfilment. *Siddhi in spiritual life usually means* the freedom of the soul (Moksha or Mukti) even while living (Jeevanmukti) It is the last but the most important of the four objects of the traditional Indian system of life namely, religion (Dharma) possessions and wealth (Artha) fulfilment of desires (Kama), and *liberation of the soul (Moksha)* The conscious soul on account of its attachments, is in bondage to the senses to the sense objects, to the ego and is consequently full of sorrow and suffering

Brahman. The shell of the self is shattered, its canalization as the person or body with limitation is transcended, and identity with the Atman is experienced by the whole being. It is a highly spiritual experience of an extremely joyful condition, of an indefinable bliss, where the pure consciousness is aware of itself and of nothing else. Samadhi is understood to be mainly of two kinds conceptual (Savikalpa) and trans-conceptual (Nirvikalpa) In the former the aspirant experiences oneness with some definite concept of God. In the latter the aspirant is beyond any concept whatever, even of God. The best illustration of these two states can be seen in the Sadhana of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He could go easily into Savikalpa Samadhi and enjoy unitive experience with Mother Kali, who was for him the embodiment of the ultimate Truth. He found it difficult to go beyond that stage. Then Totapuri, his Guru, pressed with some force a piece of pointed glass in the centre of Shri Ramakrishna s eyebrows while he was meditating and a little blood was drawn, but it resulted in enabling the unique disciple at that very moment to destroy the concept of Mother Kali that had been standing in the way After that not only could he have Nirvikalpa Samadhi but he was also able to stay in that condition for three days continuously The Paramahansa was tempted to remain absorbed all the time in that kind of Samadhi. But an injunction from above, that he should continue to lead a life of Bhakti (Bhava Mukha Thak) in the world, made him descend to normal life. This form of Samadhi is also called "seedless Samadhi" (Nir beeja) in so far as it does away with the very "seed" of all Karma and of future births and deaths.

Another Samadhi which should be mentioned here is the Sahaja Samadhi, natural Samadhi. In the case of Siddhas who are accustomed always to be in Samadhi, either Savikalpa or Nirvikalpa, by force of habit, that condition becomes almost natural. It is not necessary for them to endeavour, or make a great effort to attain Samadhi. It is as natural to them as the

the *Gita* give preference to the Siddha who is active and busy in helping others. The *Gita* has it that a Siddha who carries on his duties unattached and as an instrument of the Divine is greater than others. *Gita* repeats many times that Karma Yoga is superior to other Yogas. We should not be under the misapprehension that the poise of a Siddha is always that of a quiescent and inactive being. It is one possible poise but not the only one or necessarily the best or the highest. Whenever the question arises, the Upanishads, notably the *Isha* and *Mundaka*, and the *Gita* declare that the greatest poise is that of being active and yet unattached, unaffected, and entirely free from the bondage of Karma. In fact this is the poise of the Brahman himself. He is the Doer and yet the Non-Doer *par excellence*, as he is not bound by what he does. He is eternally and entirely free. In Bergsonian parlance, such action is "free action" action as of a mountain stream or of a cloud of rain or of a joyful babe or of an inspired poet.

Siddhi is usually supposed to follow the fullest possible realization of the Atman or Brahman. It would accrue to one who attains Samadhi. Samadhi is the final stage of Yogi Patanjali's eightfold Yoga. It should not be confused with trance or a spell of ecstasy or with sleep, any of which states may overwhelm an aspirant during contemplation. Sleep is the condition of unawareness of our consciousness, while Samadhi is all-awareness of the Atman. Similarly trance and ecstasy are of a temporary nature, though during their continuance one can experience supreme bliss. They are usually however experienced without any spiritual significance. Moreover neither are at the command of the aspirant. Samadhi is essentially a spiritual condition which is wooed and induced after great effort. An advanced Yogi develops the capacity to attain it at will. It involves the whole personality.

Samadhi is of several kinds. The main characteristic is always the unitive experience of the self with the Atman or

to contemplation or emotive meditation or to a quiescent poise when the limbs are at rest. This experience is possible even while the physical body is engaged in action dedicated to Brahman. What is essential and the very soul of Samadhi is the experience of ecstatic unity with the Atman. Nothing else matters so long as that is there.

Siddhi, or attainment of spiritual perfection, has different meanings in Buddhism, Jainism and other systems of thought and Sadhana in the world. The ideal of spiritual perfection which each separate system proposes for itself, is in accordance with its faith, its philosophy and its metaphysics. It is natural that it should be so. Though all would agree that it is a state of beatitude and that it is the acme of all spiritual progress, each school of thought differs in defining the final stages of Siddhi. But, since the Siddhi aimed at by Sri Aurobindo was in line with Vedantic traditions, one need not go into details regarding ideas entertained by the several other schools of thought.

Before considering the nature of Aurobindo's Siddha and other allied matters, it will be helpful to remember what is known as the post-Siddhi status and poise of a Siddha, and the qualities and attributes other than spiritual, which may be expected of him. As we know one who has attained full Siddhi is called a Siddha, one who is perfect. He may also be designated a Siddharoodha or Yogaroodha. Both terms connote that a person is enthroned on perfection or on Yoga. There are also three other words used in this connection, Mukta (free) Jeevanmukta (free while yet living) and Videhamukta (free after one has left the body). The meaning of Mukta (free) is quite clear. The Siddha is free from the bondage of the senses and therefore free from the law of Karma. He enjoys the status of a soul that is free from bondage to any force or power outside or inside himself. He partakes of the freedom of the Atman. Jeevanmukta is one who has attained the freedom of his soul while still living. His body continues to live till natural death. His past Karma

waking state to the common man That is why in Sanskrit it is called, Sahaja, natural. The permanent and continuous pose of such a Siddha is one in which he is constantly attuned to the Atman and is a silent witness to what his body and mind do. He is so detached that, to him his own actions appear to be those of a body and mind which are not his own. His self is identified with the Atman and not with the body If we were to look into the eyes of such a person in Samadhi it would be plain to us that the eyes do not actually see anything going on round about them. It would require some effort to draw the person's attention to anything When called, he would gradually become attentive as if waking from sleep or from a dream, he would gradually become attentive It is said that Shri Ramana Maharshi of Arunachalam was normally in this kind of Samadhi.

One more Samadhi the Bhava Samadhi is often mentioned in connection with Shri Ramakrishna. This is Samadhi through emotion. Of course, in the case of Ramakrishna the emotion was always devotion love of the Mother It was mostly in connection with the Mother, and the experience was that of identity with Her His consciousness had become so subtle and sensitive that the slightest reference to Mother or spiritual truth was enough to send him into Samadhi.

It is not out of place to say something here about Karma Samadhi which is mentioned in the *Gita* (Chap. IV 24) Shri Krishna says that all is Brahman. If one realizes this supreme truth and always acts in the constant consciousness of it then whatever one does is dedicated to Brahman One's whole life becomes a sacrifice in which the doer the sacrifice itself, the offering, the fire in which an offering is made are all Brahman. One is sure to attain the Brahman through Samadhi which in this case is in the form of action done for Brahman. Here action too is mentioned as capable of being a form of Samadhi (Karma Samadhi) Clearly the meaning is that Samadhi i.e. ecstatic active unitive experience with the Divine need not be restricted

do his duty like Janaka with a view to seeing that people's interests are served. Explaining his own pose, Shri Krishna says that he has nothing to gain by either doing or not doing anything. But, he says, he continues to do things in order to serve as a model to the people and to keep the wheels of the world moving "These worlds shall be destroyed if I act not" declares Shri Krishna.

But the question arises whether any direction can at all be given from outside to a Siddha whether he is bound by convention or social obligation, whether there can be any categorical imperative for him. The only answer is a negative one. For one who is in tune with the Infinite who else can be a guide but the spirit within? The Infinite comprehends not only society humanity and this world but the totality of eternal existence. It would be temerity on our part to try to dictate to such an enlightened and liberated soul. It might well be that in our solicitude for human society and our eagerness to obtain the services of a Siddha, we might be prompted to expect social services from him! But it must be left entirely to such a soul to do or not to do, what it will, as "the wind bloweth where it listeth" The very fact of the existence of such a free soul the success and triumph it has achieved through strenuous Sadhana over bondage and entanglements is already service enough. We must leave it to such souls to say with the Buddha, what he told his disciples after enlightenment (Sambodhi) In reply to the question. "Now that you have attained your spiritual goal, why not enter Nirvana (the final goal according to Buddhism, corresponding to Mukti) and be done with it?" he said "Dear ones, till there exists a single human being in this world even with a trace of suffering, I shall endeavour to remove it. My Nirvana will have to wait till then."

Another question likely to be asked is whether Sadhana should continue after Siddhi. The reply is certainly in the affirmative. The content may change but the Sadhana must continue.

(Sanchita) has been destroyed His Karma after attaining Jeevanmukti cannot bind him. But his Karma which started to operate and was the cause of his birth (Prarabdha) will liquidate only at his physical death. A Videhamukta, when his soul is free from the body will not suffer rebirth but will enjoy the status of a free soul forever Thus a Mukta, which is a generic term is called Jeevanmukta while alive and a Videhamukta after he leaves the body

Whatever the name and designation we have to describe the poise of a Siddha after attaining Siddhi We have already noted that some of the Upanishads and especially the *Gita* appreciate a Siddha better if he continues to be busy with his duties, in the interest and to the benefit of the world. So far as his individual soul is concerned, the Siddha will have attained everything that can comprise personal spiritual ambition. He consequently feels continually exalted (Dhanyabhava) He is one who has fulfilled his mission (Kritartha) What should be his next step? The alternatives are that ever after he may strive to be, continuously and without a moment's respite, in contemplation of the Divine. This is described in books on spirituality as a life like that of inert matter (Jadavat) Or he might choose to live in Divine consciousness adopting the attitude of a child, which is known as Balavat. One other way would be to live with great and unrestrained divine enthusiasm singing and dancing and laughing out of ecstatic enjoyment of union with God This kind of God intoxicated life is likened to that of a madman (Unmattavat) There is one more poise in which a Siddha may be found to be most unconventional erratic, moody, and extremely whimsical That conduct is like that of a ghost or a ghoul (Pishachavat) There is yet another way however, and one that is looked upon as the highest. It is the way of King Janaka who, though a Siddha, carried on his kingly duties without stint but without attachment Shri Krishna himself the Yogi of Yogis and the greatest among the Siddhas, exhorted Arjuna to

spiritual attainment and none other

Sri Aurobindo in a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy says that even though his own Yoga aims at all-round perfection, he does not intend to impose that ideal on all other spiritual endeavour He writes "The Yogi arrives at a sort of division in his being in which the inner Purusha, fixed and calm, looks at the pranonic of an unreasonable child, that once fixed, he can proceed afterwards to control the outer man also but a complete control of the outer man needs a long and arduous Tapasya. But even for the Siddha-Yogi, you cannot always expect a perfect perfection; there are many who do not even care for perfection of the outer nature which cannot be held as disproof of their realisation and experience. If you so regard it, you have to rule out of court the greater number of Yogis of the past and Rishis of the old time also. I own that the ideal of my Yoga is different, but I cannot bind by it other spiritual men and their achievements and discipline. My own ideal is transformation of the outer nature perfection as perfect as it can be. But you cannot say that those who have not achieved it or did not care to achieve it had no spirituality Beautiful conduct—not politeness which is an outer thing, however valuable—but beauty founded upon a spiritual realisation of unity and harmony projected into life, is certainly part of the perfect harmony "

Let us now see as to when Aurobindo attained Siddhi and the nature of it. Afterwards we shall consider his post-Siddhi Sadhana and its rationale, as well as its characteristics.

When we look upon the aims with which Aurobindo started his Sadhana and then note the changes which occurred, we have the feeling of witnessing a mighty swollen torrent which rushes towards the sea, gathering up in its rapid course streams and currents that come its way Similarly all the Yogas the technique perfected by the Gita, the Tantric method and all other systems devised for reaching the highest, contributed to the evolution of Aurobindo's Sadhana. But it should be remembered

Shri Ramakrishna was most emphatic about this matter The *Gita* has anticipated such a question. It says that in Karma Yoga, till attainment, Karma (without attachment) is the means of Siddhi but after that, the peace that results from Siddhi is the means of action (Shamah Karanamuchyate) But there is yet another circumstance. After Siddhi, the Siddha may further wish to continue his efforts to attain manifold spiritual ends In that case, the Siddha immediately becomes a Sadhak in relation to the fresh spiritual aims which he proposes to achieve It was this that happened to Aurobindo he continued his Sadhana, though in a different and higher direction, even after Atma Siddhi. And, as we feel, continues his spiritual Sadhana through Mahasamadhi

There is a common notion current that a person who is spiritually a Siddha, is perfect and profound in everything else. For instance, he is expected to be a scholar, a poet, a warrior, all in perfection It is true that Sri Aurobindo aimed at finding a way by which the whole of life as well as humanity could be divinized It is also true that the practice of Yoga is supposed to give the aspirant what is called "the eight perfections (Ashta Siddhis) These perfections are Anima (becoming as subtle as an atom), Mahima (becoming as big as the biggest thing on earth), Garima (becoming heavy at will), Laghima (becoming light at will) Prapti (capacity to touch the farthest thing) Prakamya—(get things done at will) Ishitva (lordship over all) and Vashitva-(control over all) But one ought not to confuse these occult or supraphysical powers with either spiritual attainments or perfection in other respects In fact, these "Ashta-Siddhis" are considered to be temptations in the way of a true Sadhak. He should not even look at them but keep straight to the path of spirituality It is very necessary to realize the limitations of a Siddha in matters other than spiritual experience. It may well be that other powers are quickened and those which have remained submerged are revealed. But essentially, his is a

not satisfied with his attainment. If he had been a Sadhak of the usual type, he would have spent his remaining life in explaining his experience and guiding those who went to him for light and lead. But fortunately for India and for humanity he charted for himself a grander plan to probe deeper into the mysteries of human evolution and into spiritual truths other than those of his own personal salvation.

As with all Siddhas, so with Aurobindo the essential and necessary characteristics of spiritual Siddhi were evident. But here we will consider some of the added and special characteristics in his case

After the attainment of Siddhi, Aurobindo lived not only a dedicated life but one entirely directed by the Lord enthroned in his heart. Though he looked upon India as Mother and revered her his deity (Ishta-devata) for some years was Shri Krishna. The last words of Arjuna in the Gita, "My delusions are dispelled. My mind stands firm: its doubts have now ended. I will do your bidding," could very well fit the lips of Aurobindo after his vision of Vasudeva, the Lord of all, in Alipore jail.

Aurobindo was not averse to using occult powers, the attainment of which is a usual consequence of Yogic practices. He never sought them but he thought that they could legitimately be used by Yogis, as a remedy for removing the suffering of others, provided there was nothing vain or selfish or egoistic about it. Throughout his life he was never very sensitive to physical pleasure or pain, though when stung by an ant in jail, he felt the pain severely But his Siddhi gave him the power of withstanding pain to an extraordinary degree. He could enjoy pain. How powerful is the spirit which can transmute pain into pleasure! With regard to intellectual powers and the impulse of poetic inspiration, Aurobindo said that as a result of his Pranayam and Yogic practices, he profited greatly in both fields, even before attaining spiritual Siddhi. After Siddhi, of course these powers were more and more in evidence. He says that he never wrote

that his Sadhana, as it took shape was an organic growth. Ultimately it assumed the form of Integral or "Purna" Yoga with the triple strand of Jnana (knowledge), Bhakti (devotion) and Karma (action) It was one progressive movement of the ardent hungry soul of "the son of man' towards the total possession of Reality It was penetrating in its vision, comprehensive in its sweep and intense in its purpose. The aims of Aurobindo's Sadhana expanded in ever widening circles from the attainment of Brahmatejas to bringing down the Divine to supramentalize the whole of humanity itself. He started with an aim to spiritualize an individual although with a higher purpose than is usual. He ended by presenting an ideal which is as deep as the human heart and as far reaching as the peoples of the gloe His Siddhi was commensurate with his vast aims and his great Sadhana.

I have already described in detail what Siddhi usually means. When did Aurobindo attain that Siddhi? He considered the 24th of November 1926, as the day of Siddhi. But that was in connection with the vision of the Supramental power As regards the usual Atma-Siddhi one can safely say that it was during his period of incarceration in jail that it was achieved. Earlier, there had been a number of spiritual experiences some familiar to all who practise Pranayam, and others peculiar to himself. The most significant of these experiences was when he was in Baroda *in January 1908. Yogi Lele was with him. As a result* of that unique experience an infinite calm came to Aurobindo. From then and to the end, his Sadhana was entirely directed from within by the Atman lodged in his heart His absorbing vision of Sri Krishna, while in jail, set the seal on all former endeavours and when he was released from the prison he spoke as one blessed, as one on whom *Divine Grace* had descended Thenceforward, whatever he thought and said and did had the background of that Siddhi through Darshan.

Aurobindo's personal spiritual career according to traditional conventions reached its acme there, in Alipore But he was

did. I mentioned his choice merely by way of explanation and not to suggest a reason for the choice. If I may now state a paradox, his choice was not his but was made for him by the same Inner Lord, Antaryamin, who guided him for so long. It was the Antaryamin who inspired Aurobindo to say "Yes, I have come for that" in reply to the direct question, "Is your real work this invocation of the Supramental ?" ("*Among the Great*" by Dilip Kumar Roy).

It went against the grain of Aurobindo to hug spirituality simply because the world of matter was bad or inconvenient or full of difficulties. His ultimate mission was not only to storm the spiritual world but also to conquer with weapons of the spirit the material world which, he considered was but spirit in deep slumber. He was as much a denizen of the spiritual world as of the world of matter the only difference being that he knew by experience that the former was basic and fundamental while the latter was comparatively derivative. It was this integral and total view of Reality of Being Becoming, with Purushottam at the apex, that made him take as intense an interest in politics and science and matter as he did in spirituality. It was only when he felt he ought to find a higher spiritual basis for politics, that he went to Pondicherry. Afterwards, came the call for higher Sadhana, to the exclusion of politics. Here again, his effort was not for absorption in the Being or the Nirguna Brahman, but to bring the supermind, the Ganges of spiritual power from Himalayan heights down to the plains, for irrigation and fertilization. Evolution, he thought, would not end in Mukti (Liberation) but in Bhukti (enjoyment of the play of God) when there would be accession of spiritual power with the triple capacity to sublimate, to transform, and to render mightier. His diagram of evolution did not lead directly from the Saguna into the Nirguna. It went from the Nirguna down (involution) to Saguna, then up to Nirguna and then again down to Saguna to be transformed by Nirguna.

for "*Arya*" in the usual way He would take up his pen, put it to paper, and find that his article was written without conscious effort on his part. He has somewhere written that it was no longer necessary for him to think that he saw and felt things without deliberate thought His writings for "*Arya*", and similar actions, can rightly be designated as "free actions or Mukta Karma (i.e action that does not bind) About his moral standards nothing need be said. Such a Siddha becomes an ideal for morality and moral conduct to others. His noble conduct in the political field where divergence from the ordinary norms of morality and truthfulness are not only tolerated but at times looked upon as a virtue, will ever remain as a high-water mark in public conduct.

The special spiritual characteristics of Aurobindo's Siddhi we already know To him everything was Spirit, including gross matter The soul is not separate in the sense of being isolated with a special destiny of its own but it is a manifestation of the Divine partaking of Its essence and playing its own small role in the Divine cosmic drama In the course of evolution therefore the identity of the soul with the Divine is inevitable The function of Yoga is to expedite it Aurobindo's poise was his constant and unremitting identity with the Purushottam who is the Ground and in whom both spirit and matter being and becoming are reconciled. He is, according to the *Gita* (XIII 23) the onlooker (Upadrishta) the assentor (Anumanta) the upholder (Bharta) the enjoyer (Bhokta) and the great lord (Maheshwar) He had dynamic views on spirituality and on spiritual life His vision of a highly evolved humanity led Aurobindo to his post Siddhi Sadhana and to his mighty attempt to discover a way to divinize life.

I have already said that after Siddhi a Sadhak has certain alternatives, but that his choice of one or the other cannot be imposed from outside. With Aurobindo however there were various factors which impelled him to take the arduous course he

civilization. His almost inborn spiritual bent made it easy for him, when he returned to India, to immerse himself in Vedanta and Yoga. He took to it as a babe takes to its mother. Instead of seeing conflict or finding inconsistency between the East and the West, he evolved a synthesis of both, as well as of spirit and matter of science and Vedanta. Further his philosophy synthesised the different schools of Vedanta also. His extreme nationalism and worship of Mother India did not come in the way of his choosing the English language an international medium, for his writings. He had, however to adapt the language and the idiom in such a way that Indian concepts and philosophy which can be expressed in Sanskrit or any other Indian language far more easily could be conveyed with clarity to the modern educated mind. Whatever he has written, bears the stamp of his vision, his comprehensive range, and his incisive style. He has written so much, so systematically and so clearly and on such a variety of subjects that there is hardly any need for interpretation. and I do not find it necessary to detail here his philosophy or teaching. A brief summary indicative rather than exhaustive, should suffice.

Aurobindo has left to posterity not merely a philosophy but a whole teaching, an ideology as well as a way of life, and a technique of Sadhana, followed and tested by himself. He does not merely point out the ideal and leave us to grope after it, as best we may. He cut a path to it and trod it himself; it is now a beaten track as hundreds of his own disciples have followed it, first under his own direction and now under the careful guidance of the Mother. Philosophy for him was not merely an intellectual pastime, neither was it for the satisfaction of his curiosity that he wrote so much on the subject. Philosophy is usually an intellectual exposition of the truth of things and the relationship between the categories of existence, as conceived by the respective philosophers. But for Aurobindo and for others such as he, philosophy is something that arises out of the direct apprehension

This circular but eternally spiral movement is the geometrical pattern of the dynamic involution-evolution that goes on. There is no fullpoint in ever-creative evolution nor any quiescence Since there is ever-creative and dynamic evolution, throughout infinity there is infinite scope for finding out new truths of being and for having new experiences. Aurobindo drew on the past and had the greatest respect for the Rishis and the seers who had sighted Reality and described it in unmistakable terms. But to him that did not mean the end of all quest On the contrary, he visualised a far more glorious future. It was this vision that led him to new heights and to fresh adventures in the wilderness of titanic forces which are at work in human evolution.

CHAPTER XII

SRI AUROBINDO S TEACHING

Sri Aurobindo's teaching arose out of his own being and becoming out of what he was what he experienced and what he did. It radiated from him like light from a luminous body It was often effortless and issued mostly out of inspiration It was a part of the mission for which he felt he was called During the last few centuries India has thrown up a few mighty Vedantins and interpreters of India s immortal teaching Of them Aurobindo has been the latest to pass away His teaching is the most comprehensive most detailed and most illuminating It is something far more than a new statement of old doctrines or a fresh interpretation of ancient texts. He is more in the tradition of the Rishis the Drishta (Seer of the Mantra) than in that of a Smritikar (writer from memory) or a Bhashyakar (commentator) or a saint His vision was vast and penetrating and its range, the range of human consciousness itself His early education and life in England gave him an insight into the modern scientific mind and brought him into close touch with western

civilization. His almost inborn spiritual bent made it easy for him, when he returned to India, to immerse himself in Vedanta and Yoga. He took to it as a babe takes to its mother. Instead of seeing conflict or finding inconsistency between the East and the West, he evolved a synthesis of both, as well as of spirit and matter of science and Vedanta. Further his philosophy synthesized the different schools of Vedanta also. His extreme nationalism and worship of Mother India did not come in the way of his choosing the English language an international medium, for his writings. He had, however to adapt the language and the idiom in such a way that Indian concepts and philosophy which can be expressed in Sanskrit or any other Indian language far more easily could be conveyed with clarity to the modern educated mind. Whatever he has written, bears the stamp of his vision, his comprehensive range, and his incisive style. He has written so much, so systematically and so clearly and on such a variety of subjects that there is hardly any need for interpretation: and I do not find it necessary to detail here his philosophy or teaching. A brief summary indicative rather than exhaustive, should suffice.

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not yield real and full meaning and fruitful result unless they are read and studied in the light of each other. It is another matter if one is satisfied with only a mental picture of the whole. But that is not much when one has to deal with the Truth of life and things and when one is curious to know the practical method of arriving at truth and living it. We must have the will and daring to make experiments, so that we may experience the truth ourselves. Otherwise all these theories remain so many words and formulas. There will never be a chance of their taking concrete shape and affecting our lives in an effective manner.

Let us look at some of the more important aspects of Aurobindo's teaching and note their significance. Both his philosophy and Yoga took shape in his mind quite early in life, even before he was forty. Since he wrote profusely expressing himself in one form or another the grains of gold of his teaching lie scattered and can be gathered in almost all his writings, prose as well as poetry. But it is in "*The Life Divine*" his *magnum opus* that we strike the gold mine of his philosophy while in "*The Synthesis of Yoga*" we find laid before us a path by which we may attain the intensely coveted divine life. His "*Savitri*" is in a class by itself. It is "*A Legend and a Symbol*" as Aurobindo adds to the title. To one who loves poetry and is blessed with imagination, "*Savitri*" is a fountain of perpetual joy. In this book, we are face to face with a mighty soul that has coined its experience into words of magic, and thrown them into the currency of the poetical world. Words and sounds here are like the Pegasus whose wings carry us aloft and give us glimpses of the very secret of things. For all practical purposes, the three works just mentioned, embody Sri Aurobindo's teachings. His letters are additionally important and highly interesting. They throw light on many dark corners which could not conceivably have been illumined by his other writings. They illustrate his theory by covering concrete cases and shed light on particular questions

of truth by the whole being and out of the spiritual realities experienced. Deep down in the heart of man there is dissatisfaction and disconsolateness with the life of the senses, with the fleeting nature of joys and sorrows, with the conflict and duality of things in the world, with the discord and disharmony prevalent everywhere and with the ignorance, the limitation and the helplessness of the human soul. The eternal pilgrim in the body therefore is in quest of truth, in search of light, in pursuit of strength to overcome all limitations. He is hungering after harmony and unmixed joy. He is yearning to know the truth, possess it, apply it to life and live and move and have his being in its shadowless light. It is only this kind of full life, a whole life, an integral life, a life in which not only the intellectual powers but the whole of consciousness and the total personality is involved that can satisfy a real seeker after the truth of existence. Aurobindo often exhorts us and assures us that the spirit is neither remote nor away. It is not a stranger to us. We live in the midst of it and our consciousness plays on its lap. If a person but cares to look into himself he will find something of the Spirit that is spoken about so often by every religion on earth. There is no doubt that ' the mind thinks, the vital craves, but the Soul feels and knows the Divine'', for in each soul there is a spark of the Divine. In this matter Aurobindo belonged more to the class of mystics and to the religious-minded saints and seers who tread this world as guests from the spiritual spheres than to the philosophers and metaphysicians who belong to the world of the mind and scratch their heated brains to produce thought-systems and logical theories.

Aurobindo's teaching comprises his philosophy and his Yoga. The former constitutes the theoretical portion of it and the latter the practical side of it. Though for the convenience of our understanding and for a clear intellectual grasp the two are considered separately they are so intertwined and interpenetrating and so vitally connected with each other that they do

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and problems. They come under the heading "applied teaching as they were all written in response to personal queries. Moreover, he bestowed extreme care in writing them, as in almost every case he knew the person concerned, his circumstances, and the stage of Sadhana reached by him. Above all he realized the responsibility he had undertaken to discharge the vital function of guiding the "faithful to the destined goal.

Partial and incomplete descriptions or statements both with regard to his philosophy and his Yoga have already found their way into this book. That was bound to happen as nothing worth while can be written about Aurobindo without referring to both these aspects of his teaching Aurobindo is Aurobindo because of his inner experiences his thought and his Yoga One could not therefore avoid writing about them in a book which centres round him. It is obvious that what is written here is neither a substitute for nor a full summary of his own writings. It is enough, if by reading what is written here, the reader is able to form some idea of the monumental structure of philosophy that Aurobindo raised It is enough if his curiosity is roused and his eagerness to enter into deeper thought is quickened It may be that, given a general idea about it before entering into detail the reader will not feel lost in the vastness and the richness and the beauty of the various facets of his philosohpy Similarly with his Yoga. Let us deal firstly with philosophy and then with Yoga.

The basic foundation of his teaching as confirmed by his own intuition and experiences rests on the Upanishads and the Gita. His study of the Vedas came later and reinforced the conclusions he had already reached. Vedanta says, the Spirit exists, the Spirit alone exists. All else is a willed manifestation of the Spirit which is "One without a second The Spirit which is characterised as Sachchidananda is immanent in all manifestations. The involution of the Spirit is followed by evolution as well. In man Chit (consciousness) has attained the stage of self-consciousness. There-

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known systems of thought and spiritual practices in and out of India and formulates an ideal and a path of his own. But in this he is not merely an eclectic. He brings to bear upon all that came his way a masterly synthesising genius which results in integrality instead of hugeness and massiveness, in real synthesis instead of mere co-ordination or eclecticism. It is not a mechanical mixture, but a chemical combination that is before us.

The name "*The Life Divine*" which he chose for his philosophy cannot be improved upon. In these pregnant words the world of meaning that his philosophy connotes, is revealed. There is life involved in matter and in other forms of existence along the whole range between matter and life. It has evolved through ages of effort, from the first protein molecule and from unicellular to the multicellular existence. The apex of the evolution of life today is Homo sapiens so far as this planet is concerned. In the course of development, consciousness has emerged and there has been individualization to the extent of the formation of a psychic entity. As a consequence we have self-consciousness and the power to look back and know the very source and fountainhead of things as developed. This self-consciousness tracing its history to the very beginning of its existence and to the Cause of the existence of all other existences tries to reach the Source of all sources, the Divine. The soul of man is dazed at the perfection, the immanence, the transcendence, the infinity and the sorrowless joy of the Divine. It is stunned by the contrast of its own insignificance and evanescence and sorrowfulness. It is at this stage that out of the depth of man's heart rises the plaintive cry "Asato Ma Sadgamaya (lead me from falsehood to Truth) Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya (lead me from darkness to light) and Mrityorma Amritamgamaya (lead me from death to immortality)." It is as if in response to this heart-felt prayer that in the *Gita* the Divine says, "Having been born in this world transient and sorrowful be devoted to Me." It is the realization of the soul and the knowledge of the possibility of

reaching perfection one day, that man starts thinking about ways and means of fulfilling his ambitions. It is during this quest that the soul discovers Yoga. These things and everything implied in them, and their interrelations form the subject-matter of the philosophy expounded in "*The Life Divine*". The ways and means based on the facts and postulates of this philosophy form the subject of "*The Synthesis of Yoga*" or Integral Yoga or Purna Yoga, as one may choose to call it.

One of the points often raised against Indian philosophy is that it is not a pure philosophy meaning thereby that it is not a purely intellectual inquiry and an intellectual theory. Most of the great philosophers in India have been not only "professional" philosophers but also Yogis, great mystics, Siddhas, or saints. Aurobindo is no exception. A philosophy that is not based on experience by the total being of man and one that cannot be lived, has not much attraction for the Indian mind. An Indian looks upon life as a totality. His philosophy is not an *a priori* theory based on preconceived ideas. Neither does he draw upon mere imagination or sentiment, nor depend upon hallucinations or mere subjective experiences and he does not clothe his theories entirely in mystic language. This does not mean that he avoids mysticism or mystic experiences. They are far too important to be left out. Mysticism has been rehabilitated in modern philosophy and it is recognized as a part of life and as a part of data, even for the most orthodox type of modern philosophy. What is very significant in Aurobindo's philosophy however is that it is based on evolution and is fully aware of the latest evolutionary trends as well as what modern science has to say. He is not the only modern philosopher to take into account the trend of evolution and to speak about superman and the coming race. Ideas about the superman may differ but many thinkers have written about him, about the sixth sense, about a new race. What Aurobindo has done in addition, however is to experiment with Yoga, the technique of developing humanity and to

assert from his experience that this is the way to usher in the new humanity The evolutionary development in nature is always there. What he has done is to present to the world the possible efforts that man could consciously make to expedite the evolution, not only by trying to reach up to but by trying to bring down the higher powers to help the process. It is this message which has invested his teaching with a reality and concreteness with an urgency and an intensity not to be found in philosophies written as only a rational explanation of things. Since life itself is dynamic and is evolving a philosophy of life must also, if it aims at being a real philosophy be dynamic. It must fulfil a need and satisfy the demand of the human being to know the truth by which he can live and thus progress in his eternal pilgrimage.

Modern science today after centuries of questioning and experimentation, tends to suggest that what exists is energy and everything else even gross matter is but a modification of it, is but a *form of it in a certain condition which changes every* moment After starting with a multiplicity of elements, science gradually discovered that matter and energy were the only two things which existed When matter was further analysed it evaporated and left energy alone as master of the situation But the *problem of life remained It seemed to be energy, but of a different* order Now however the demarcating line between life and energy has thinned Life is characterized by consciousness, which includes will, the power to know the capacity to store knowledge, and so on. Then life also has been evolving and has developed *to the stage of the human being in a natural* and historical process. The materialist who believes that inconscient energy is the ultimate reality says that all evolution is due to the potentialities that material energy inherently possesses. Consciousness itself he says is a result of energy arranging itself in a particular way *It is here however,* that those who believe in the primal reality ask if consciousness is something which results

from changes in energy what is the cause and principle of this change? Does it not mean that energy embodies already the principle of consciousness? Can it come out of nothing? Moreover is it not indicated that there is an element of will (a characteristic of consciousness) in energy which causes it to arrange itself in various ways and produce innumerable phenomena, including life and conscious beings? The believer in the spirit pleads that spirit is already in matter in energy in life, and in consciousness. Moreover if energy or matter does change and evolve, it must either change mechanically or by a kind of self determination. In the former case there is absolute determinism, in the latter case, there is something like will or consciousness. Today few subscribe to mechanical determinism. What remains is self-determination and that means the existence of involved will or consciousness. Some deny matter altogether and say that it does not exist at all. We can derive matter and energy from spirit but not vice versa. But to understand all this and to carry on experiments, we have to leave the test-tube and the laboratory and transfer ourselves to the field of consciousness in man. It is there that consciousness has evolved to the highest and the manifestation of the spirit is the utmost That is why the ancients in India delved deeply into themselves. If the test-tube is the laboratory for the study of matter and energy the heart of man and the grey chambers in his brain is the laboratory of the spirit. It is therefore quite right to say that inner experiences are greater and more reliable guides in spiritual matters. Thus were the truths of the Upanishads and the Gita arrived at. The spirit is the primal reality and matter is a derivative. We shall see how it is a derivative.

Spirit and matter apparently contradict one another but science has already come to the conclusion that matter is not the solid thing it appears to be but a form of intangible energy It is seemingly inconscient, merely mechanical and without any trace of consciousness. But is it really so? Since consciousness

evolves out of matter in the form of life, under certain conditions, it must be potentially present in it in however subtle a form. Now spirit in its essence can neither be cognized nor described in the common way It is something beyond perception or conception. It is beyond all dualities. The Upanishads offer a description, it is true, but that is only because some description and characterization has to be there if the thing is to be the object of thought. Spirit is, therefore, described as unknown but not unknowable It can be experienced and felt when one is in tune with it Thus while the spirit itself which is the supreme Reality remains undescribed it can be characterized as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, (Sach-chid-ananda) these three being one and unitarian and not separate and different. It is self-existent it is forever and forever It is beyond time since it was, it is and it will be eternally *Everything is present to it.* What light is to the Universe time is to Eternity The eternal existence is of the nature of consciousness a unity of knowledge will and power The third attribute is Ananda which again is unity of infinity beauty and pure delight of sport or joy

The Spirit is immanent as well as transcendent and is the Ground of everything that ever was, and will be Being the self existent and self-determined it is out of its Ananda aspect that all creation issues, which is its sport or Lila. This is the becoming aspect of Reality and it is as eternal as being itself In this Lila *or sport or becoming is the root of involution It is only by a limitation* in what is unlimited that there can be becoming or creation. For instance every finite thing is a *seeming* limitation of the infinite. Mathematically speaking any number is a *seeming* limitation of infinity Infinity however is not affected even if the whole of infinity itself is subtracted from it That is what the Upanishad means when it says that the Integral Reality remains what it is even when whole worlds and universes are created out of it. But the fact remains that every creation is a *seeming* limitation of life and to that extent it is an involution of the aspects of Sach-

chidananda. Another illustration can be given. If we attempt for a moment to clear our consciousness of everything except a general awareness, what remains is an awareness of awareness, which means a potentiality of knowing anything that may appear on the horizon of the consciousness. However as soon as I am aware, say of a sun in my consciousness, it is a limitation of my awareness to that extent. There is the knowledge of the sun, but for the time being there is also ignorance of things other than the sun, as all the stress is on the sun and my consciousness is absorbed in it. But of course the difference between the limited consciousness of man and the infinite consciousness of Sachchidananda is there. While the Sachchidananda remains unaffected by the limitation, the thing that is created becomes subject to *seeming* limitation of everything that it derives from its unlimited source. It is this *seeming* limitation that is the involution, that is creation, that is becoming that is the beginning of all universe and of matter itself. Within our knowledge, we can say that matter is the uttermost of creation. It seems to be furthest from consciousness, so much so that we think that spirit and matter are quite contradictory and the one cannot have anything to do with the other. But that is not the case. The very fact that life and consciousness evolve out of matter and are able to organise and utilise matter in the course of evolution, proves that matter is involved in spirit. The very measure of involution is the measure of its distance from the spirit in the scale of creation. The more the consciousness is involved in a thing, the lower it is in creation. But there is nothing that is without consciousness in creation. In matter consciousness is much involved; there is very little that is free from it and it is not easy for us to detect that little. On the other hand, the less the involution and higher the evolution, the more is consciousness free as in living beings and in man. So far man is the most evolved of animals as he has more of free consciousness than any other. When the superman comes, how-

evolves out of matter in the form of life, under certain conditions it must be potentially present in it in however subtle a form. Now spirit in its essence can neither be cognized nor described in the common way It is something beyond perception or conception. It is beyond all dualities. The Upanishads offer a description, it is true, but that is only because some description and characterization has to be there if the thing is to be the object of thought. Spirit is, therefore, described as unknown but not unknowable It can be experienced and felt when one is in tune with it Thus while the spirit itself which is the supreme Reality remains undescribed, it can be characterized as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (Sach-chid-ananda) these three being one and unitarian and not separate and different. It is self-existent it is forever and forever It is beyond time, since it was, it is and it will be eternally Everything is present to it. What light is to the Universe time is to Eternity The eternal existence is of the nature of consciousness, a unity of knowledge will and power The third attribute is Ananda which again is unity of infinity beauty and pure delight of sport or joy

The Spirit is immanent as well as transcendent and is the Ground of everything that ever was, and will be Being the self existent and self-determined it is out of its Ananda aspect that all creation issues, which is its sport or Lila. This is the becoming aspect of Reality and it is as eternal as being itself In this Lila or sport or becoming is the root of involution It is only by a limitation in what is unlimited that there can be becoming or creation For instance, every finite thing is a *seeming* limitation of the infinite Mathematically speaking any number is a *seeming* limitation of infinity Infinity however is not affected even if the whole of infinity itself is subtracted from it. That is what the Upanishad means when it says that the Integral Reality remains what it is, even when whole worlds and universes are created out of it. But the fact remains that every creation is a *seeming* limitation of life and to that extent it is an involution of the aspects of Sach-

bates have been named. The instrumentality through which the involution starts is the Supermind. The main characteristic of it is Truth-Consciousness and the power of truth itself. It is only after supermind and below it that overmind, higher mind and others take their places. Then we have life and matter in the descending order of involution. Evolution can be described as a rediscovery of consciousness in its ascending order till it finally becomes pure consciousness and reaches again the stage of Sachchidananda. To put it in the simplest possible words, Reality is in the nature of pure consciousness, one infinite and beyond all duality and relationship. Out of its own will and sheerly out of the manifestation of its joy-aspect, it limits itself. Every such limiting is a diminution of itself and an involution, and an occasion for creation. Reality being infinite, no amount of such diminution or involution or creation brings about any change or deterioration in the Reality itself But the descending movement has a limit since consciousness cannot eliminate itself or commit suicide. So, then the ascending movement has to start and this ascent is evolution ending where it started, i.e., in pure consciousness.

Aurobindo stresses another point, that the Supermind is the link between Sachchidananda on the one hand, and mind on the other The Supermind is the Shakti of Sachchidananda. It is the dynamic power of knowledge and will of Sachchidananda. Both involution and evolution take place through its instrumentality It is the Supermind that develops the three aspects of Sachchidananda without either separating or dividing them. In fact, Aurobindo's special claim is in the discovery of the exact function and details of the Supermind. He was busy also with evolving precise Sadhana for utilizing its full power for human evolution But for this Supermind and its help, the full divinization of mind, life and matter would not be a practical proposition. The human soul can ascend all right but if it is to descend in order to divinize and make a "life divine" possible

ever, he will have been endowed with far more free consciousness than man has. All liberation or rather real liberation is the liberation of our consciousness from involution. The more our consciousness is capable of freeing itself from its involved condition and of being itself in its pure form, the more liberated we are. The condition of utmost liberation is that which Patanjala Yoga calls 'being established in one's own real self (Swarupe Avasthanam)"

Thus Spirit and Matter are two extreme modes of one existence. In terms of consciousness, for that is the most important characteristics of the spirit (existence and joy being included in it), *the former is pure consciousness and all-conscious, while the* latter is unconscious and a bundle of nescience It seems as if it is purely mechanical without any trace of consciousness. But there is the Ground the Purushottam, the Paramatman in whom both are reconciled and synthesised That is the parent of all. That is the Supreme Reality beyond even creation or any other modification. It is the pure essence of everything including both spirit and matter and all their modifications.

The main outline of the philosophy of Aurobindo is therefore that there is an Absolute Transcendent which cannot be described except as that which is beyond and above everything conceivable. *At the same time, it is the synthesis of being and* becoming of spirit and matter It is the Purushottam of the Gita and is beyond the Kshara (perishable) and the Akshara (imperishable) But the form in which human consciousness can cognize this Reality is as Sachchidananda. It is self determinate, and out of its sheer sportiveness and delight and through its Chit Shakti it limits itself by a stress which becomes the starting point of creation. All creation is involution, and matter may be said to be the lowest and the last point of such involution. The descending order would begin from Sachchidananda which is not three but three-in-one It is a unitarian consciousness but for purposes of *understanding* its characteristics the three attri-

himself and establish peace and harmony to integrate his own personality. Then he has to establish harmony with the outside world. He has to work for the emancipation of the human race. According to Aurobindo emancipation of the Human race lies not merely in the attainment of Mukti and absorption into the Absolute but in the divinization of mind, life, and matter, here and now in this terrestrial existence. It can be done, he says, if the Supermind is realized and its powers invoked for this purpose. It is promised through Integral Yoga.

Man is, at the moment, far below the status of a divinized being. His instruments for attainment of his spiritual objects are rather crude and insufficient. In the first place, he is still subject to the momentum by which involution started. From these beginnings, he has to build a temple of God within himself, and invite Him to come and stay there. The human body has its own powerful material vital and mental urges towards sense-objects which prevent the mind from concentrating on the inner Atman. This weakness and the weakness of will allow strong attachment to grow between the soul and outer objects. This attachment is the cause of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow love and hate and so many other dualities. The mind itself is a very poor instrument because its powers are limited. It is a good servant of present life and is designed more for analysis, for seeing differences, for distinguishing one thing from another rather than for apprehending the truth of existence.

There are a few instances where man has transcended his difficulties. These instances are sufficient as pointing to the potentialities and the possibilities of the human being being able to prove that God is secretly in the heart of man and that Man is his manifestation. This can be realised God can be revealed, and life can be lived according to the dictates of the Inner Spirit. There is no doubt that man's mind is tossed between dualities, has only partial knowledge, and is caught in the conflict between good and evil, morality and immorality But those who have

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Now, coming to humanity itself, it has not evolved beyond a certain point. But since consciousness in man has developed self consciousness, the possibility of a conscious participation in evolving further, has arisen. There is no doubt that individual consciousness is weighed down and limited by many factors, the body, the vital urges, the limitations of the mind the inability to perceive truth as it is, egoism and so on. But in spite of these limitations of all others in creation man alone has a chance of assisting in his own evolution He can play his part not merely for his individual evolution but can help the evolution of a race of supermen. The coming of the new man in the course of evolution is as assured as was the coming of the present man. This then is the main metaphysics and philosophy of Aurobindo and his theory of the evolution of man. It will be easily seen that it is based on some of the proven scientific truths of the modern age.

The question now arises, how best can man help the evolutionary process already in progress. It naturally forms the subject matter of a separate treatment termed "Integral Yoga

If "*The Life Divine* represents the theoretical part of Aurobindo s teaching Integral Yoga is the practical side of it The former deals with the what, when, why and who of the grand mystery of existence and the latter deals with the how of it. Existence is a mystery and a problem to man alone and to none else Therefore, it is he alone who has to solve it. Many solutions have been suggested and tried during the long history of humanity Here is one more suggested by Aurobindo. His Yoga aims at being not only integral but also a synthesis of all Yogas, especially of the three most important ones, namely Jnana Karma, and Bhakti. Let us see what he suggests

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attained Siddhahood have proved that human consciousness can be trained to rise above these human frailties to a poise which is beyond pleasure and pain beyond good and evil A supra ethical poise is one of the characteristics of the perfect superman.

Over millennia India has developed the science and art of transcending the normal consciousness and attaining a poise which may be termed superconscious. Various experiments have been made with the different powers of man, physical, vital, mental, intellectual, moral and spiritual. Since all are unified in the personality of man they can be developed conserved controlled, concentrated coordinated and utilized for the highest purpose of attaining superconsciousness. They can be sublimated for divinizing life. In its totality this effort is called Yoga. Aurobindo in the process of developing Integral Yoga, found that the supramental level is most important It is the operative link which can bring about changes in the planes (Koshas) below in such a way as to divinize mind life, and matter itself Divinization does not merely mean that the Divine can use or act through them. It means that the stuff of which they are made would be transformed into far more subtle, pure and high material, so that the whole standard of existence would be raised Such transformation could usher in the Life divine

Aurobindo s system can be designated variously as Integral or Purna Yoga, as synthesis of Yoga as Yoga of surrender, as supra mental Yoga, or as Yoga of the supermind There is justification for and significance in every one of these names It is Integral or Purna because *it is total Yoga in the very sense that war is total* war, in which every resource is employed simultaneously and unstintingly on all fronts in order to win a victory Other systems of Yoga put emphasis on one or more of the different powers of man. For instance Bhakti Yoga mainly employs the emotional power of man as a channel to God But in Integral Yoga the Sadhak employs all his powers in a supreme effort of will to approach and apprehend God In another sense Integral Yoga is a

Purna Yoga, as it seeks Yoga or communion with the total God, if one may be permitted the expression. Here the Sadhak does not aim for union with either absolute or the becoming aspect of the Lord separately but with the Lord in all His aspects and on all the planes of consciousness, wherever He can be contacted. In yet one more sense it is Integral. It seeks not only to realize the full Divine but further yearns to bring down the Divine to the lowest rung of involved consciousness in order that consciousness may be divinized and thus complete the full cycle of involution-evolution of the Divine. In "*Arya*" of September 1914 Aurobindo said, Yoga is that which, having found the Transcendent, can return upon the universe and possess it, retaining the power freely to descend as well as ascend the great stair of existence." Thus it is Purna not only as regards the means and the path but also as regards its ideal. More modestly it is called a synthesis of Yoga, since this system seeks to synthesize other existing Yogas. Integral Yoga can also very appropriately be called the Yoga of surrender because in other Yogas surrender or Atmanivedana, comes at the end of the Sadhana. Purification and other steps come earlier But in this Yoga, the very beginning is with the complete surrender of oneself and all that one is or has, however crude, impure or inadequate. "All life is Yoga" says Aurobindo in another issue of "*Arya*" That sums up the Yoga of surrender described above. Yoga of the supermind, would also suit quite well, because the emphasis is on contacting and communicating with the supermind, without whose active and effective cooperation the divinization of mind, life and matter cannot be expedited. Just as for instance, in Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga, Jnana and Bhakti play respectively the most important parts, here the Supermind or higher Vijnan plays the vital role

Purna Yoga starts with a basic faith regarding the nature of Reality We know what Reality is according to Aurobindo's philosophy It is no longer for the Sadhak to question it. His pro-

blem now is how to commune with that Reality how to secure a unitive experience with it and how to stabilize a poise in that experience. In "*The Synthesis of Yoga* Aurobindo tells his readers 'Well, this is how you should reach the goal of the life divine the goal of supermanhood and supernature' He says that faith is fundamental in the attempt, and along with it an ever fresh and intense aspiration to achieve the spiritual end When faith and aspiration are there Integral Yoga requires the Sadhak to surrender his whole being to the Lord in a supreme effort of will The surrender is with the intent to invoke the help of the Lord for his Sadhana Atmasamarpana or Atmanivedana (self surrender) is the decisive action that helps the Sadhak to attain the highest in spite of all difficulties that may come his way It helps him not merely by rousing his powers to their climax but the Mother the Adishakti herself takes up the burden of the Yoga and ensures success It makes way for 'grace" to descend at the proper time to consummate the efforts of the Sadhak

'Yoga Siddhi says Aurobindo 'is best-attained by the combined working of four great instruments" ("*The Synthesis of Yoga*")—Shastra, Utsaha, Guru and Kala. Shastra is the science of Yoga incorporating the body of experiments and traditions left by great Yogis Utsaha is the flame of ever brightening aspiration upward bound Guru is a master of Yoga who by personal instruction can guide the Sadhak (in exceptional cases as with Aurobindo the inner Guru of gurus himself conducts the discipline) Involution has taken time and evolution also must take kala, time, Yoga seeks to cut short that time but it cannot be eliminated altogether In a sense all is given, but at the same time all has to happen Aurobindo says All teaching is self revealing all becoming is an unfolding Self-attainment is the secret self knowledge and an increasing consciousness are the means and the process "

A passage in "*The Mother* sums up very briefly the effort that

a Sadhak has to make in order to advance in this path of Yoga. "The personal effort required is a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender – an aspiration vigilant, constant, unceasing—the mind's will, the heart's seeking, the ascent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature; rejection of the movements of the lower nature—rejection of the mind's ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind,—rejection of the vital nature's desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy envy hostility to the Truth, so that true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large, strong and consecrated vital being,—rejection of the physical nature's stupidity doubt, disbelief, obscurity obstinacy pettiness laziness, unwillingness to change tamas, so that the true stability of Light, Power and Ananda may establish itself in a body growing always more divine surrender of oneself and all one is and has, and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti."

It is this kind of Yogic Sadhana that enables the aspirant to battle against all obstructions along the difficult path. Then on page 21 of "*The Yoga and Its Basis*" we read "the crowning realization of this Yoga is when you become aware of the whole world as the expression, play or Lila of an infinite Divine personality when you see in all, not the impersonal Sad-Atman which is the basis of manifest existence —although you do not lose that knowledge,—but Shri Krishna who at once is, bases and transcends all manifest and unmanifest existence Avyakto Vyaktat Parah."

What is most important about Sri Aurobindo's Yoga has now been clearly indicated, especially its approach, its aim, its standpoint its totality and its main steps starting from faith and surrender

A brief outline of the philosophy and Yoga of Aurobindo has

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Now coming to humanity man is at a certain stage of evolution and is capable of knowing that stage and of taking steps to evolve upwards to the next stage, that of the superman. The process would be easier and the evolution speedier if through Integral Yoga man invoked the supermind, which is the direct and operative agent in the matter of evolution. Whatever the Siddhi, and however great the perfection of a person, it is bound to be limited in its range and power as long as it is on the mental plane or the Manomaya Kosh. It is only Siddhi on the supramental level that can invest the Siddha with powers that can expedite evolution by the utilization of supramental powers for transforming the mind, life, and matter constituting man. Aurobindo lays the highest stress on this matter and in "*The Riddle of the World*" he says, The Vedic Rishis never attained to the Supermind for the earth or perhaps did not even make the attempt. The Rishis knew the Supermind, attained it and passed on to the Divine but did not think in terms of utilizing it for life on earth, for humanity. In a letter to a disciple he has said, I have not found this method (as a whole) or anything like it professed or realized by the old Yogas. If I had, I should not have wasted my time in hewing out paths and in thirty years of search and inner creation, when I could have hastened home safely to my goal in an easy canter over paths already blazed out,

been given so far in these concluding paragraphs. It may be helpful here to recapitulate some of the important points on which he has laid special stress I mean the distinguishing features of his great teaching

Aurobindo refutes the idea of any essential duality between, or mutual contradiction of spirit and matter He declares that what exists is the Spirit mind, life, matter are all spirit in different forms. There is nothing like Maya or illusion in connection with matter or the material world. The spirit can be described as infinite potentiality It is by a process of involution similar to that described by Henri Bergson in connection with the *élan vitale* in his "*Creative Evolution* that out of its own initiative the spirit issues forth in innumerable forms Being infinite it is neither diminished nor affected by the creation of these forms and universes. But there is the inverse movement as well, namely, evolution whereby that which is involved evolves. Thus creation can be described as a double movement, involution-evolution, a descent and an ascent. While the Spirit, being absolute and infinite, remains as it is, it is the Sachchidananda aspect of the Spirit, which is at the root of the eternal involution-evolution. While Sachchidananda is the being aspect creation is the becoming aspect of the Spirit Aurobindo has designated the Supreme Spirit as the Purushottam of the Gita while Sachchidananda is the Akshara (imperishable) and creation is the Kshara, the ever changing perishable one.

Just as there is no Maya as such so too there is no ignorance It has no positive existence. Ignorance is partial knowledge which is there on account of involution. Ignorance bears the same relationship with the Chit aspect of Sachchidananda as darkness with the sun. So too absolute non-existence or nothing *and similarly* absolute misery or positive evil do not exist Though they all strike us as positive existances, they are in fact the partial and temporary non-existances of their opposites which, of course, exist in their own right.

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laid down perfectly mapped macadamised made secure and public.

Aurobindo's path is that of total surrender of all the powers right from the beginning He has explained in the "Arya V, p 283 "The principle of Yoga is the turning of one or of all powers of our human existence into a means of reaching the divine Being In an ordinary Yoga, one main power of being or one group of its powers is made the means, the vehicle the path. In a synthetic Yoga all powers will be combined and included in the transmuting instrumentation. He arrived at Integral Yoga and thought it to be the best because all power whether it be mental, intellectual or emotional, is in the end one all power is really soul-power Why then think of a single power as an instrument? Why not consecrate the whole being with all its powers and make the Yoga integral?

It is of the utmost significance to know and understand thoroughly why Aurobindo was not satisfied only with the gospel of Adwaita Vedanta which preaches absorption of the individual soul in the Universal Soul. He stood rather for bringing the power of the Universal Soul down into the earth consciousness, so that mind life and matter are transformed and made capable of a Divine life here on earth. The former, according to him, was not a solution it was again an escape though on a very high level It is like a few people going up the hills and living there It is not a cleansing of the slums and making them worthy of human living For similar reasons, he was not satisfied merely with the gospel of social service which is obviously based on humanitarian considerations and on the theory that a person is essentially an integrated individual of humanity What would it avail one may well ask, if this thing is to go on like this eternally? Poverty misery ignorance jealousy and other seeds of quarrel would continue to sprout and no amount of social service can root out those seeds At best Adwaita Vedanta is a "remedy which claims to cure though it is limited in fact to only

symptomatic treatment. It can neither cure radically nor prevent diseases. He laid stress, therefore, on striving for an essential change in human nature which will root out the causes of misery and make man the master in his own house, the master of peace, love and harmony. The gospel of Nishkama Karma too is the best way no doubt, of "doing things" whereby the "doer" is immunised from all undesirable reactions and is rendered into a fitter instrument of cosmic activity. But that too does not visualise a change for the better in human nature itself.

All the three foregoing teachings would add more Jeevanmuktas, more giants in the field of humanitarian activity and create more perfect instruments of great and good action, free from attachment and the inexorable bonds of Karma. But they cannot prevent the limitations, the evil, the misery the helplessness of present-day humanity enwrapped, entangled, and enmeshed, as it is, in the unpreventible embrace of mind, life, and matter. It is only the descent of a higher power on these levels that can raise the potential of man to transform himself and transcend himself. Aurobindo's Yoga essentially seeks to arm man with the equipment necessary for this great task. Man cannot, for instance with his present body fly in the air. He has to be equipped otherwise he remains chained to the earth. Everything else that is done may enable him to run about with the highest speed on the earth but it cannot lift him up in the air by a hair's breadth. So too will man remain entombed in mind, life, and matter unless the higher power descends and invests him with greater and subtler powers. It is the descent of the Supermind alone, according to Aurobindo, that can bring about this consummation.

The most important aspect of Sri Aurobino's teaching is in its aim and ultimate purpose, which is to divinize the whole of humanity by transforming mind, life, and matter. At present all the three which constitute man, are gross and very crude. The usual way would be to extricate the soul from mind, life

and matter to find a haven in the Divine But Aurobindo has a distinctly different and higher approach. Individual salvation, or for that matter the accepted type of salvation even for the whole of humanity, was not very attractive or of much consequence to him. What he aims at is divinization and simultaneous transmutation, not only of human beings as they are, but also of the very material of which they are made. The mental, vital, and material stuff of which man is made today is sought to be transformed into a subtler finer, and nobler substance capable of taking man's whole being to a far higher level of existence where pure knowledge, great harmony, and divine bliss shall reign supreme.

SUPERMIND AND SUPRAMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The adventure of consciousness which Sri Aurobindo has pioneered in modern times led him to the Supermind and Supramental consciousness. They would help man in his ascent towards divinity. The whole purpose of the eternal cosmic play is the progressive manifestation of the Divine: the Supermind and supramental consciousness are the powers which are helping lift humanity from its present stage of evolution to supermanhood, to Life Divine. To understand fully the thought and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, it is essential to know what these new concepts of Supermind and supramental consciousness mean.

It is interesting to know as to how and what inner experiences led him to these concepts. We should know that the thought-system of Sri Aurobindo is not built merely on intellectual ideas and concepts: it is an achivement and a system of discipline built on spiritual experiences whose validity does not depend on only sensory perceptions and deductive logic. His was an inner experience by his whole being and personality.

I would therefore rely on Sri Aurobindo's own words in this connection in the book, 'Sri Aurobindo on Himself'. A fresh reference is now available in 'Talks with Sri Aurobindo', pages 211-12, by Nirodbaran. When asked as to whether the idea of the Supermind and supramental consciousness was his, he gave the origin of the concept:

Sri Aurobindo: "It is not my thought or idea. I have told you before that after the Nirvana experience I had no 'thoughts' of my own. Thoughts used to come from above. From the beginning I didn't feel Nirvana to be the highest spiritual achievement. Something in me always wanted to go on further. But even then I didn't ask for this new experience. In fact, in

and matter to find a haven in the Divine But Aurobindo has a distinctly different and higher approach. Individual salvation, or for that matter the accepted type of salvation even for the whole of humanity, was not very attractive or of much consequence to him. What he aims at is divinization and simultaneous transmutation, not only of human beings as they are, but also of the very material of which they are made. The mental, vital, and material stuff of which man is made today is sought to be transformed into a subtler finer and nobler substance capable of taking man's whole being to a far higher level of existence where pure knowledge great harmony and divine bliss shall reign supreme.

be permitted to go further to explain these terms which have been used by Sri Aurobindo. It would be unitive consciousness, grounded in identity with the totality of the Divine, of which the dualities like spirit matter being-becoming, transcendance-immanence, personal-impersonal, one-many are but nodes.

It is this vision and what is more, this supra-sensual perception and experience is central to Sri Aurobindo s thought, teaching and philosophy

The next important thing about Sri Aurobindo is that he does not want the process of the evolution of man, from man to superman to be left any longer entirely to nature. According to him, a stage in the evolutionary movement has been reached when man himself has to launch on the adventure of contributing to the process by his own efforts. That is the meaning and purpose of his irrepressible aspiration to be master of himself of the deepening of his self-consciousness, and his ability to meditate on himself in order to understand the laws of his own evolution with a view to influence it. That is why Sri Aurobindo says 'all life is Yoga and characterises all Yoga, which in essence is an effort towards the realization of Life Divine as 'conscious evolution

Sri Aurobindo has pointed out that Integral Yoga is the path towards the earliest realisation of Life Divine.

The next important aspect of Sri Aurobindo's teaching is that the aim of Integral Yoga is conquest and spiritual transformation of the whole gamut of terrestrial existence, including body mind and all the faculties, with a view to the attainment of Life Divine, here and now Thus the aim is neither only a liberation of Man s consciousness from the burdens and shackles of body-mind complex; nor is it an escape from them into an existence of restful joy nor is it the elimination of desire (trishna) for reaching the goal of a joyless and colourless Nirvana nor is it a tireless and ceaseless round of duties performed without any desire for the fruit, and with the fullest sense of

Nirvana with that peace one does not ask for any thing But the truth of the Supermind was put into me. I had no idea of the Supermind when I started and for long it was not clear to me.

It was the spirit of Vivekananda who first gave me a clue in the direction of the Supermind Thus clue led me to see how the Truth-Consciousness works in everything

N "Did he know about the Supermind ?"

Sri Aurobindo "He didn t say 'Supermind 'Supermind is my own word. He just said to me, This is this, this is that and so on. That was how he proceeded by pointing and indicating He visited me for fifteen days in Alipore Jail and until I could grasp the whole thing he went on teaching me and impressed upon my mind the working of the Higher Consciousness —the Truth-Consciousness in general which leads towards the Supermind. He would not leave until he had put it all into my head

With this introduction I may try to state some ideas which are central to the attainment and discipline of Sri Aurobindo.

The present human mind in general has certain weaknesses on account of its limitations Our approach to truth is predominantly *intellectual*. Whenever any new *thing or experience* presents itself to us we begin to equate it or interpret it in words and terms already known to us. Even those of us who have come to believe that man has evolved from the primates and that the ape is our ancestor hardly think that that dynamic evolutionary process is still on and that the emergence of super mankind can be a certainty Even when we think that the emergence of a superman is a possibility, our present habits of mind make us think of him in terms of the heightening of the powers and *faculties* which man already has. We rarely conceive that the coming man may have a consciousness which could be different in quality—*it could be higher consciousness*, truth-consciousness, supramental consciousness, divine consciousness I may

be permitted to go further to explain these terms which have been used by Sri Aurobindo. It would be unitive consciousness, grounded in identity with the totality of the Divine, of which the dualities like spirit-matter being becoming, transcendance-immanence, personal-impersonal, one-many are but nodes.

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surrender to the Divine.

The new vision the aim and the particular method of Yoga may all be there. But which is the power and process to help man in this divine endeavour? Here again Sri Aurobindo had the experience of a twofold movement the upward urge or the aspiration of man to ascend to Life Divine and the downward descent of the Supermind to lift the spirit of man to the divine level Sri Aurobindo has said that his intense search for Life Divine led him to the discovery of this process. While in Alipore Jail (1908) he had the realization that All is Vasudeo, all is Divine The next step was the experience of the Supermind

It is the Supermind which so to say, presides over the spiritual destiny of mankind. Sri Aurobindo has clarified and characterised the full meaning and function of the Supermind in several of his writings. It is the descent of this Supermind which holds the secret of the ascent of man to Life Divine. Conscious effort to quicken this process is Man s duty When the Supermind descends fully on earth in response to the conscious as well as unconscious aspiration will and effort of man it enables him to realize Life Divine The Supermind enables him to see and know and act truth to live instinctively in harmony and unmixed joy with the whole universe by transforming all the instruments of feeling thinking and willing into instruments for realising life Divine. The supramental consciousness will enable the evolved man to live simultaneously in the transcendant and immanent dimensions of existence, since that consciousness is the door to the perfect Divinity which is beyond all dualities including the concepts of transcendant and immanent

APPENDIX II

SRI AUROBINDO S EARLY LIFE IN ENGLAND

As the result of special researches he made in India and in

England into the early life of Sri Aurobindo Ghose, Sri A.B. Purani of the Pondicherry Ashram, published in 1956 an interesting booklet, "*Sri Aurobindo in England*" I give here some of a number of facts concerning Aurobindo's 13½ years' student-life, 1879-1893 taken from Sri Purani's account to which I have added certain observations of my own.

During the infancy of his children—when the family lived together at Khulna, Bengal—Aurobindo's father Dr K.D Ghose of the Indian Medical Service, engaged an English nurse to mind his children and accustom them to English speech and ways of living The younger boys, Mano' and Auro consequently grew up ignorant of their native tongue, Bengali, only English and Hindustani being spoken by them.

To all intents and purposes anglicised by his education and visits to Britain, his medical profession and outlook, Dr Ghose, who was nominally atheistic towards religion, arranged for his three sons, Benoy bhusan, Mano-mohan and Aurobindo to receive their initial schooling at a Christian preparatory school. Accordingly in 1877 when Aurobindo, the youngest was five years of age, the boys were sent as boarders to the Irish Loretto' Convent school for young European children in Darjeeling There the children remained, at the feet of the Himalayas, until 1879 when their father took his whole family of wife three boys and only daughter (Sarojini) to Europe intending to leave the boys in England to further their education after the best traditional British style.

Shortly after the family arrived in the United Kingdom, Barindrakumar was born at Croydon, Surrey Upon settling Beno Mano and Auro' in Manchester on the understanding that they were not to be persuaded into any religion until old enough to decide the issue for themselves, Dr Ghose had soon to return to India with his wife, daughter and newly-born son, to resume his duties at conclusion of his leave.

Aurobindo' is the Bengali pronunciation of Sanskrit

'Aravinda', meaning the lotus, water lily The appellation 'Sri' added to his name is simply a courtesy-mark of dignity and respect due to the status and social standing of an Indian gentleman. The name 'Ghose (or 'Ghosh), is the clan family, or social (caste) designation, the patronymic or surname as it were.

Sri Aurobindo's education in England, from 1879 at the age of seven until six months short of his majority may be summarised thus

Until September,	1884 in Manchester,	5½	years,
„ December	1889 in London,	5½	„
October,	1892 at Cambridge	2¾	„
„ January	1893, in London for	3	months,
„ February	1893 on arrival Bombay by s.s. "Carthage		

At Manchester the three brothers were left to lodge and board with a *Protestant (Congregational) clergyman* the Revd. William H Drewett and his wife against an annual remittance of £360 equivalent to about Rs. 35 per week (exchange rate then was Rs. 15=£) each of three The two elder boys were now able to attend the Manchester Grammar School daily but Aurobindo being too young for secondary education, was tutored at home by the Drewetts husband and wife. Mr Drewett himself an accomplished scholar, grounded Aurobindo thoroughly in English and Latin, whilst Mrs Drewett taught him history geography arithmetic and French At the same time the young pupil also imbibed the Bible as well as poets such as Shakespeare Shelley and Keats, among others.

When, in 1884 Mr and Mrs Drewett decided to emigrate to Australia the brothers were left in the custody of Mr Drewett's mother with a Mr Ackroyd nominated as their guardian It was now that, as a matter of identity as to his guardian Aurobindo was given a second name of 'Ackroyd He was enrolled at College and the University as 'Aurobindo Ackroyd Ghose and

so accepted for the Indian Civil Service. Sri Aurobindo dropped the 'Ackroyd' from his name before he left England and never used it again.

Nothing is now known about Mr Ackroyd except that he appears to have been responsible for entering the two younger brothers as pupils at St Paul's Public School, Kensington, in London where also Mrs Drewett, senior was apparently living at the time and arranged for the three Bengalis to be lodged in her care while they attended school and until sufficiently adult to fend for themselves.

About early autumn of 1887 Mano-mohan found lodging elsewhere, and Benoy-bhusan and Aurobindo moved into rooms at the top of the building occupied as the offices of the South Kensington Liberal Club 128, Cromwell Road; and there Aurobindo stayed until his transfer to Cambridge. To quote Sri Purani: "This was perhaps the most trying period of Sri Aurobindo's stay in England. They were all so hard pressed that Benoy-bhusan had to accept being an assistant to James S Cotton, who was Secretary to the Club ... During this period Sri Aurobindo used to get a piece of bacon, tea and bread, in the morning, and some pastry or saveloy sandwiches for a penny and a cup of tea in the afternoon. For nearly two years he had to go practically without dinner at that tender age. There was no overcoat to protect him from the rigours of the London winter and there was no heating arrangment or fire in the office where he slept. There was hardly what might be called a bedroom ... It appears quite certain that the three brothers were compelled to live in a very embarrassed position in London because remittances from their father at first became irregular and then ultimately almost stopped." Writing to Sir Arthur G Macpherson, Secretary of the Judicial and Public Department of the India Office, on behalf of Aurobindo, Mr James S. Cotton said on November 19 1892, "It happens that I have known Mr A. A. Ghose and his two brothers for the past

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showing command of English and literary ability That a man should have been able to do this (which alone is quite enough for most undergraduates) and at the same time to keep up his I.C.S. work, proves very unusual industry and capacity Besides his classical scholarship he possessed a knowledge of English literature far beyond the average of undergraduates, and wrote a much better English style than most young Englishmen He has had a very hard and anxious time of it for the last two years. Supplies from home have almost entirely failed, and he has had to help his two brothers as well as himself, and yet his courage and perseverance have never failed I am quite sure that these pecuniary difficulties were not due to any extravagance on Ghose s part: his whole way of life, which was simple and penurious in the extreme, is against this: they were due entirely to circumstances beyond his control." (vide pp 60-61 *Sri Aurobindo in England*)

Young as he was at the time when at Cambridge, Sri Aurobindo could not see any advantage in qualifying academically merely for the sake of putting letters after his name. Accordingly he did not take any specific Degree. Although qualified in excess of requirements for the B.A. degree he could have, circumstances permitting, gone on to any extent in higher educational qualifications: but his time was limited and he wanted to return to India as soon as possible since he had "decided to devote his life to the service of his country and its liberation."

While still an undergraduate of King s College and at the same time a probationer of the Indian Civil Service Aurobindo began to lose interest and enthusiasm for serving the British in India as an administrator As an excuse for not being finally confirmed in appointment to the Civil Service he purposely refrained from taking the horse-riding test which was one of the necessary qualifications. As he himself expressed it, he "felt no call for the I.C.S., and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage" and, "by certain manoeuvres managed to get

five years and that I have been a witness of the pitiable straits to which they have all been reduced through the failure of their, father, a Civil Surgeon in Bengal and (I believe) a most respec table man, to supply them with adequate resources I could tell you a great deal more if you would care to give me a personal interview" (Vide page 59 *Sri Aurobindo in England*)

This historical note would not be complete without some mention of Aurobindo's assiduity over and above his ordinary academic studies. During his attendance at St Paul's the High Master of that College Dr Frederick William Walker, took a keen interest in him by including him, among a few other exceptionally promising students in a special coaching class devoted to Greek Latin and other classical subjects. No doubt this extra tutorage helped young Aurobindo towards passing the final of the I C.S examination with credit gaining record marks in both Greek and Latin and in later winning an open scholarship to King's College, Cambridge University

Again it must be said Aurobindo took every opportunity of furthering his general knowledge during the school and university vacations. He not only studied English and classical poetry and literature as a whole from intense interest in these subjects but went on to French literature and the historical background of medieval and modern Europe and closely followed the general political scene of the times Not content with all he had learned he gained a working knowledge of German and Italian languages in order to be able to read Goethe Dante and others in their original tongues instead of as translations

Sir G M. Prothero who was a Senior Tutor at Cambridge and later Provost of King's College paid a tribute to Sri Aurobindo when writing about him to Mr James S Cotton Among other matters he wrote "He performed his part of the bargain as regards the College most honourably, and took a high place in the 1st class of the Classical Tripos at the end of the second year of his residence. He also obtained certain college prizes

some cults he is looked upon as God or even more important than God himself, since, according to those cults, without him and his guidance and grace, self-realization is impossible. There are however some who believe that no single Guru is necessary and that self-guidance with occasional help from others is enough to lead one to the highest point of Siddhi.

There have been speculations and statements by biographers and writers about Sri Aurobindo s Guru. He himself has however made things perfectly clear in this regard by dropping hints and suggestions once and again.

That his was mostly a 'Guided life is evident and his references to this phenomenon are more than clear It is equally clear that sometimes Sri Aurobindo has referred to a voice or voices. He has referred to SHAKTI which can and does mean the personification of the Supreme Power transcendant yet immanent.

Other references may be mentioned as follows —

1. He learnt his first lessons in Pranayam from an engineer named Devdhar who was a disciple of Brahmanand Swami of Chandod on the Narmada river
2. Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele was helpful to him when he was stuck up at some stage. Sri Aurobindo has clearly stated in what respects he was helped by Lele. But later Lele sent word to him through Kavibhusan B.G Khaparde of Amraoti that thereafter Shakti was guiding him and doing everything for and through him. Lele also had realised that he could not help Sri Aurobindo after reaching a certain point and had told him that he should be guided thenceforward by his Inner Power
3. Sometimes Sri Aurobindo used the planchette but that was not for any guidance in his Spiritual Sadhana. Once however a whole book was dictated by the planchette and published under the pen-name, Uttar Yogi. But Sri Aurobindo stopped its republication under his signature

himself disqualified without himself rejecting the Service, which his family would not have allowed him to do. (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself* P 12 13)

Perhaps he had decided that loyalty to his country might be prejudiced by loyalty to the I C.S and vice versa his loyalty to the Service could conflict with his love of his Mother country which, naturally came first in his estimation. It was while at Cambridge that he developed strong patriotic sentiments which he occasionally expressed emphatically in his speeches, as a Member at the Indian Majlis meetings first started at that time. His fearless and frank advocacy of revolutionary views may also have had something to do with his rejection of the Indian Civil Service as a career

At the age of about thirteen Aurobindo recalls that he suddenly became conscious of being selfish and thereupon inwardly decided that selfishness in any form in him would be resisted and cast away On another occasion, while reading Max Muller's edition of '*The Sacred Books of the East*, the idea of the Atman, the Supreme spirit struck him and he was convinced that Vedanta was something to be realised in life and not merely thought about.

What I have recorded in this Appendix represents about all that can be said of the main facets of Sri Aurobindo s early life abroad which span as Sri Purani says "seems to have been the most formative in his cultural make-up and intellectual equipment"

APPENDIX III

SRI AUROBINDO S GURU

The 'Guru' has a special connotation and significance in spiritual Sadhana in India. He is the Expert or Master who initiates, guides, and takes the devoted disciple to his goal In

some cults he is looked upon as God or even more important than God himself, since, according to those cults, without him and his guidance and grace, self-realisation is impossible. There are however some who believe that no single Guru is necessary and that self-guidance with occasional help from others is enough to lead one to the highest point of Siddhi.

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as he was not its author

4 While in Alipore Jail Sri Aurobindo heard Vivekananda's voice for a few days but that was for explaining some problems regarding higher stages towards life divine, and the voice stopped after the purpose was served.

5 When questioned directly about his Uttarpara speech regarding his experiences in Alipore Jail, Sri Aurobindo *is reported to have replied to* Kavibhusan B G Khaparde of Amraoti as follows: It is true, Sri Krishna used to come to me, and I have passed many nights in his arms.

But since Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy of Life Divine is somewhat different from the ideals attributed to Shri Krishna, the latter could not have been his Guru in the fullest sense.

6 Sri Aurobindo has made no secret of the very great and substantial contribution made by Mother to his progress in spiritual matters. The supreme place he gave her in the Ashram is unmistakable evidence of his assessment. Further, *he has stated that her arrival made all the difference* and that there was no difference between her and himself.

But this does not shed any light on the question of Sri Aurobindo's Guru.

7 Kavibhusan B.G Khaparde *mentions* (*Yogi Aurobindo and occult or esoteric knowledge* —in Marathi published in 1956) that one day Sri Aurobindo while in Calcutta (during 1908-1910) told him 'once when I was practising Yoga He whom the Theosophists call Master K.H. (Kuthumi) came and stood before me and watched my Yoga. I requested him to accept me as his disciple but he said *Your Master is different*

Reference can also be made here to Sri Aurobindo's poem (110 lines) 'The Mahatma Kuthumi (Collected

Poems and Plays of Sri Aurobindo Part 2, Nine Poems P 157) in which the following significant lines occur —

And I (Le Kuthumi) walk
Amid men choosing my instruments
Testing, rejecting confirming souls,
Vessels of the Spirit for the Golden Age (which) in Kali comes.

It is obvious that neither Master Kuthumi nor his Associate, Master M who presides (according to Theosophy) over human evolution was Sri Aurobindo s Guru.

8 From all the foregoing facts and statements, it clearly emerges that Sri Aurobindo had no human person as a Guru, that he had help and guidance from different people and forces at different times in connection with different spiritual problems and Sadhana, that some Voice guided him at crucial times and though it might have been identified by him, he did not choose to name it, and that it was Supreme Shakti enthroned in his own heart, who was in complete charge of his Sadhana and Siddhi.

APPENDIX IV

CHRONOLOGY OF AUROBINDO'S LIFE

[Note—This is mainly based up to 1926 on the four articles by A. Prasad in Dakshina, Gujarati quarterly edited by Sundaram. They have appeared in Shri Aurobindo Jeevan from February to November 1951

This is meant only for placing him and events, not for giving an idea either of his activities or his Sadhana and Siddhi or his philosophy.]

1872 — At 4 50 A.M. on the 15th of August, birth at Calcutta.

1872 77 — With parents at Khulna where his father was Civil Surgeon. Occasionally at Deoghar with mother Swarnalata Acquaintance only with

	English and Hindi.
1877 79	Loretto Convent School, Darjeeling Vacations mostly at Deoghar Mother used to have attacks of hysteria.
1879-84	In Manchester with Mr and Mrs. Drewett for education. Instructions by Dr Krishna Dhan Ghose Aurobindo s father to Drewetts not to allow contact between Aurobindo and Indians Scholar in Latin In addition to school studies, read Bible Shakespeare, Shelley and Keats.
1880	In March Barindra his youngest brother was born in Croydon, Surrey
1884-90	At St. Paul s School in London. Studies Greek Hardship on account of irregular remittances from father Started writing English poetry in 1886 Wrote Latin and Greek poetry also. Read poetry, literature, stories and novels, French literature, and history of Europe Also learned Italian German and Spanish languages. Carried all prizes for Classics. Illustrated Arabian Nights was one of his coveted prizes.
1885	Internal urge for self-sacrifice and service to others, a kind of inner transformation
1890	A scholarship of £80 when he left St. Paul s School for Cambridge
	Studied a bit of Bengali and Sanskrit. Passed in I C.S. competitive examination was entered as probationer and got scholarship
1890-92	Entered King s College Cambridge Passed in first class in Classical Tripos in one year
1891	Indian Majlis started in Cambridge Aurobindo Secretary for some time Some of his contemporaries in Cambridge were K.G Deshpande Hari Singh Gour Felix D Souza Beechcroft Pereira.

C. R. Das was in London Studying for the Bar

1892 Debarred from entering I.C.S. as an employee for failing to appear for horse-riding test.

1893 In February returned and landed at Apollo Bunder Bombay by steamer "Carthage"

First notable spiritual experience of Infinite calm descending upon him. This continued for months.

1893-1907 In Baroda State Service. Started in Revenue and other Departments, then became French teacher in College for a time. Afterwards Professor of English and then was Vice-Principal while resigning in 1907

1893-94 Articles entitled "New Lamps for Old" in *Indu Prakash*" of Bombay Later articles on Bankim, Tilak and Dayanand.

1895 First literary publication "*Songs to Myrtilla*" by Aurobindo was published for private circulation only Was reading at that time Homer Dante, Mahabharata, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, etc.

1898-99 Dinendrakumar a literary figure in Bengali, was at Baroda to help Aurobindo develop his knowledge of Bengali.

According to Dinendra, started writing "*Savitri*" while in Baroda. Date not known.

1899 Passing away of Raj Narayan Bose his father's father in-law Aurobindo wrote a poem in his memory

1900 Aurobindo's college appointment made permanent.

1901 Married in April Mrinalini, aged 14 daughter of Bhupal Chandra Bose, Ranchi.

Spent some time in May in Naini Tal with Mrinalini and sister Sarojini.

1901 Barindra came to stay with Aurobindo

English and Hindi.

1877 79 Loretto Convent School, Darjeeling Vacations mostly at Deoghar Mother used to have attacks of hysteria.

1879-84 In Manchester with Mr and Mrs. Drewett for education. Instructions by Dr Krishna Dhan Ghose, Aurobindo's father to Drewetts not to allow contact between Aurobindo and Indians. Scholar in Latin In addition to school studies, read Bible Shakespeare, Shelley and Keats.

1880 In March, Barindra his youngest brother was born in Croydon, Surrey

1884-90 At St. Paul's School in London Studies Greek Hardship on account of irregular remittances from father Started writing English poetry in 1886 Wrote Latin and Greek poetry also. Read poetry, literature stories and novels French literature and history of Europe. Also learned Italian German and Spanish languages. Carried all prizes for Classics. Illustrated Arabian Nights was one of his coveted prizes.

1885 Internal urge for self-sacrifice and service to others, a kind of inner transformation.

1890 A scholarship of £80 when he left St. Paul's School for Cambridge

Studied a bit of Bengali and Sanskrit. Passed in I C.S competitive examination was entered as probationer and got scholarship

1890-92 Entered King's College Cambridge Passed in first class in Classical Tripos in one year

1891 Indian Majlis started in Cambridge Aurobindo Secretary for some time Some of his contemporaries in Cambridge were K.G Deshpande Hari Singh Gour Felix D'Souza Beechcroft Pereira

1906 14th April, Barisal Conference, first political conference in India, when procession was dispersed by lathi charge.

12th March, "*Yugantar*" weekly in Bengali was started by Barendra. Aurobindo wrote often in this journal.

5th November prosecution was launched against "*Yugantar*" for sedition.

Aurobindo's last visit to Thana for contacting Maharashtra revolutionaries.

National College was started in Calcutta with the munificence of Subodh Mallik. Aurobindo joined it as Principal and Professor of English.

6th August, "*Bande Mataram*" started as an English weekly by Bipin Chandra Pal. On 22nd October a joint stock company took it over

Aurobindo toured Bengal districts for consolidating National Party

From October to middle of December Aurobindo was seriously ill. He spent his days mostly in Calcutta and some days in Deoghar

Congress Session in December in Calcutta, Dadabhai Naoroji presiding. "Swaraj" demanded for the first time by Congress.

1907 7th January to 15th April, Aurobindo many times at Deoghar

April 12th to 23rd a series of articles in "*Bande Mataram*" on passive resistance by Aurobindo.

1907 10th May "*Bande Mataram*" office searched.

24th July case against "*Bande Mataram*," Aurobindo and Bipin Pal involved.

December 22nd, speech at Nagpur on his way to Surat.

1907 December Congress Session at Surat. Violent

	Another spiritual experience. Some divine figure seemed to come out of his body and saved him from an accident to the carriage and four in which he was riding
1902	Contact, especially during vacation, with revolutionary groups in Bengal and Western India Aurobindo himself took an oath.
	Sister Nevedita met Aurobindo at Baroda. Referred to his being worshipper of Shakti.
	Barindra was sent to Calcutta to help Jatin Banerjee in revolutionary work.
1903	Visit to Kashmir Another spiritual experience while on Shankaracharya Hill he felt he was in the midst of the Vacant Infinite
	Wrote the pamphlet entitled "*Bhavani Mandir*"
1904	Closer contact with Maharashtra revolutionaries through Charu Chandra Dutt, I.C.S., at Thana Met Subodh Malik.
	Visit to Chandod on the Narmada to see Swami Brahmananda.
	Began Pranayam practices and Yoga after consultations with Deodhar an engineer at Baroda and disciple of Brahmananda.
	Attended Congress at Bombay and wrote on No Compromise
1905	Officiating Principal of Baroda College
	29th September Bengal partition a legal fact.
	30th August Aurobindo's famous letter revealing his inner working to Mrinalini.
1906	In March Aurobindo went to Calcutta which continued to be his headquarters till he left for Chandranagore in February 1910
1906-07	Took one year's leave without pay from Baroda College from 12-6-1906 to 11-6-1907

weeklies in English and Bengali respectively

1909 30th July Aurobindo published "Open Letter to My Countrymen" in "*Karmayogin*"

December Bengal Provincial Political Conference at Barisal.

1910 February on a direction from his inner voice, Aurobindo went to Chandernagore. Stayed in secret for a month and a half.

4th April, Aurobindo reached Pondicherry by steamer "Duplex" along with one companion.

1910-14 Silent Yoga Sadhana. Sometimes very hard life on account of want of resources. Once Aurobindo had only Rs. 1/4 on hand!

1910 In Pondicherry Aurobindo at Shankar Chetty's house till October

Paul Richard's first visit to Pondicherry and first meeting with Aurobindo.

Twenty-three days fast as experiment and resumption of normal food immediately

Editing a book called "*Yogic Sadhana*" dictated by planchette.

1912 15th August, birthday of Aurobindo observed by distribution of sweets.

French Police search residence of Aurobindo for revolutionary literature.

1913 The British spy called Beerendra staying for months with Aurobindo confessed and assured him that no report against anybody had been made.

1914 29th March Mira Richard meets Aurobindo first time.

Paul and Mira Richard propose publication of a journal and offer initial expenses. Aurobindo accepts offer and "*Arya*" starts publication on

split between nationalists and moderates.

December 28th-30th Aurobindo met Lele of Gwalior at Baroda. Lele accompanied throughout the tour for about a fortnight. Aurobindo spoke always respectfully of him.

1908 Aurobindo proceeded to Bombay, Poona, Nasik, Dhulia, Amroati and made speeches on nationalism. His complete inner surrender to God and all action according to His dictates.

1st February, Lele was invited again by Barindra to Calcutta. After a talk regarding the course followed by Aurobindo Lele and Aurobindo parted company In March, Lele returned to Gwalior after giving grave warning to Barindra in connection with course followed.

30th April the bomb outrage at Muzaffarpur

2nd May Aurobindo arrested at 48, Gray Street, Calcutta. Barindra, Ullaskar Dutt and other revolutionaries also arrested

31st August, Narendra Goswami was assassinated in hospital by Kanaiya Lal Dutt for being approver in Alipore Bomb Case

1908-09 In Alipore Jail, Aurobindo had self-realization and Darshan of All-Pervasive Shri Krishna.

Preliminary trial before District Magistrate L. Birley from 19-5-1908 to 19-8-1908.

1909 5th May, Aurobindo was acquitted and released by the Sessions Court.

30th May Aurobindo s historic speech at Uttarpara describing his self-realization and declaring his faith.

September District Political Conference at Hooghly

1909 After release started "*Karmayogin*" and "*Dharma*

	Motilal Roy carried on his activities independently
1921	Dr Munje, Col. Wedgewood and a number of others visited Pondicherry
1914-21	In spite of all activities, Aurobindo carried on his Sadhana uninterrupted by anything even by the editing of "*Arya*"
1921	"*Arya*" stopped publication.
1922	January Mother took charge of Aurobindo's Ashram.
	C. R. Das invited Aurobindo to return to politics. Aurobindo's "no" to it.
1923	Discussions on all kinds of topics at the afternoon meeting and also visits from various persons at different times.
	5th June C. R. Das came to Pondicherry and asked for blessing for Swaraj Party He was advised not to leave politics.
1924	January Dilip Kumar Roy met Aurobindo.
	July Kapali Shastri met Aurobindo.
	15th August, statement regarding his Yoga and main distinction between the old Yoga schools of thought and his own. Reference to bringing down of the Supermind for transforming mind, life and matter
1925	4th January Mother's illness.
	5th January Lala Lajpat Rai and Tandon met Aurobindo.
	May Aurobindo's reference to three contributions made by Lele to his Sadhana (*a*) vivid experience of stillness of mind, (*b*) writing and speaking without conscious use of the mind, and (*c*) habit of surrender to a power above the mind.
1925	July talk by Aurobindo regarding the descent

15th August.

1914 Aurobindo translated into English the Bengali poem *Sagara Sangeet*' by C. R. Das.

Aurobindo advised Motilal Roy to stop revolutionary activities

Pravartak' was started at Chandernagore

1915 Publication of '*Ahana and other Poems*' written between 1895-1908.

21st February was observed as Mira Richard's or Mother's birthday first time in Pondichery

22nd February Paul Richard returned to France for Military service Mira followed

1916 September opening of Aryan Stores in the city Richards advanced money for same

1918 December Mrinalini died of influenza in Calcutta on way to Pondicherry

1919 Publication of letter by Aurobindo signed as "Indian Nationalist in *New India* of Annie Besant. Subject Morley-Minto Reforms.

1920 January reply to Joseph Baptista declining his offer of editorship of a journal.

7th April long reply to Barindra's letter after his release from the Andamans.

The system of meeting friends at about 4 p.m. daily was started This continued for long with occasional breaks.

24th April return of Mira Richard to India.

Barindra met Aurobindo at Pondicherry

After Mother's return house-keeping at Aurobindo's residence changed for better

November Mother began staying with Aurobindo in the same buildings

Differences, ideological and other between Aurobindo and Motilal Roy Henceforward

APPENDIX V

HERALD OF A NEW AGE

[Note—Here are few flashes and extracts giving us an idea about the new age which Aurobindo envisaged]

" There will be first a new race representing the Super mind, as man represents the mind."

(Letter 13-8-35)

"We do not belong to the past dawns but to the noons of the future."

(*Essays on the Gita*)

" But in the concrete experience of the Divine, doubt is impossible."

(Letter to Dilip)

"The core of this inner surrender is trust and confidence in the Divine. One takes the attitude, I want the Divine and nothing else' If there is not that, then the Yoga (of Aurobindo) cannot be done "

(Letter to Dilip)

"And bring down God into the lives of men."

(*Savitri*)

"Work by itself is only a preparation, so is meditation by itself; but work done in the increasing yogic consciousness is a means of realisation as much as meditation is.

"Please remember that I have all along been declaring an Integral Yoga in which knowledge, Bhakti, works, light of consciousness, Anand and love, will and power in works—meditation, adoration, service of the Divine have all their place. Meditation is not greater than Yoga of works nor works greater than Yoga by knowledge—both are equal."

(*Mother India* Sept. 1953)

"We have undertaken a work which includes life and action and physical world. In what I am trying to do, the spiritual realisation is the first necessity but it cannot be complete

	of the Supermind
1926	30th January narration of his experiences in jail regarding painting
	24th November the date of victory Twenty four people present The coming down of the Overmind leading to the descent of the Supermind to the earth-consciousness. Observed since then as the day of victory
	24th November The day of the regular foundation of the Aurobindo Ashram Mother entirely in charge of it.
	Aurobindo retired entirely and cut off all contacts except through Mother When asked later said this seclusion was inevitable.
1927 50	Continuous development of Ashram, publications and guidance to Sadhaks.
1930-38	Heavy correspondence with Sadhaks.
1938	*Fracture of thigh bone on the eve of November* Darshan. Ill for many days.
1939	Revision of "*Life Divine*"
1942	Support to Cripps offer
1947	15th August. Statement rearding Indian Independence and general review of objectives.
1948	30th December Message regarding physical culture
1950	26th November Illness intense suffering from kidney trouble. But Darshan ceremony not abandoned.
	5th December Mahasamadhi at 1.26 A.M No decay in body for 111 hours.

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greatness for myself or others."
10-2 1935 (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* pp. 214-215.)

"A divine life in a divine body is the formula of the ideal that we envisage. But what will be the divine body? What will be the nature of this body, its structure, the principle of its activity, the perfection that distinguishes it from the limited and imperfect physicality within which we are now bound? What will be the conditions and operations of its life, (still physical in its base) upon the earth by which it can be known as divine?

If it is to be the product of an evolution, and it is so, that we must envisage it, an evolution out of our human imperfection and ignorance into a greater truth of spirit and nature, by what process or stages can it grow into manifestation or rapidly arrive? The process of the evolution upon earth has been slow and tardy—what principle must intervene if there is to be a transformation, a progressive or sudden change?

"It is indeed as a result of our evolution that we arrive at the possibility of this transformation. As Nature has evolved Matter and manifested Life, beyond Life and manifested Mind, so she must evolve beyond Mind and manifest a consciousness and power of our existence, free from the imperfection and limitation of our mental existence, a supramental or truth-consciousness and able to develop the power and perfection of the spirit. Here a slow and tardy change need no longer be the law or manner of our evolution; it will be only so to a greater or less extent so long as a mental ignorance clings and hampers our ascent but once we have grown into the truth-consciousness, its power of spiritual truth of being will determine all. Into that truth we shall be freed and it will transform mind and life and body. Light and bliss and beauty and a perfection of the spontaneous right action of all the being are there as native powers of the supramental truth-consciousness and these will in

without an outer realisation also in life in men in this world. Spiritual consciousness within but also spiritual life without.

(Letter to Dilip)

It is this stress of consciousness that makes all the difference. That is why one has to concentrate the consciousness in heart or mind (and not outside or on sense objects) in order to go within or go above It is the disposition of the consciousness that determines everything making one predominantly mental vital, physical or psychic, bound or free separate in Purusha or involved in Prakriti.'

(Letter 16 7 37)

"I know the Supermind is a truth.

It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half light half-darkness I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution If greater men *than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them* that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth sense and Truth vision If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try I do not in the least care There is no question of X or Y or any body else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption, I go on till I conquer or perish This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind no hunting for

truth-consciousness, has this knowledge inherent in it and this power of true existence its course is straight and can go direct to its aim, its field is wide and can even be made illimitable This is because its very nature is knowledge: it has not to acquire knowledge but possesses it in its own right; its steps are not from nescience or ignorance into some imperfect light but from truth to greater truth from right perception to deeper perception, from intuition to intuition, from illumination to utter and boundless luminousness, from growing wideness to the utter vasts and to very infinitude. On its summits it possesses the divine omniscience and omnipotence but even in an evolutionary movement of its own grades of self-manifestation by which it would eventually reveal its own heights, it must be in its very nature essentially free from ignorance and error It starts from truth and light and moves always in truth and light. As its knowledge is always true so too its will is always true it does not fumble in its handling of things or stumble in its paces. In the Supermind, feeling and emotion do not depart from their truth, make no slips or mistakes, do not swerve from the right and the real, cannot misuse beauty and delight or twist away from divine rectitude. In the Supermind, sense cannot mislead or deviate into the grossnesses which are here its natural imperfections and the cause of reproach, distrust and misuse by our ignorance. Even an incomplete statement made by the Supermind is a truth leading to a further truth, its incomplete action a step towards completeness. All the life and action and leading of the Supermind is guarded, in its very nature, from the falsehoods and uncertainties that are our lot; it moves in safety towards its perfection. Once the truth-consciousness was established here on its own sure foundation the evolution of divine life would be a progress in felicity a march through light to Ananda.

Supermind is an eternal reality of the divine Being and the divine Nature. In its own plane, it already and always exists and

their very nature transform mind and life and body even here upon earth into a manifestation of the truth-conscious spirit. The obscurations of earth will not prevail against the supramental truth-consciousness for even into the earth it can bring enough of the omniscient light and omnipotent force of the spirit to conquer All may not open to the fullness of its light and power but whatever does open must to that extent undergo the change That will be the principle of transformation. '

(The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth)

A divine life upon earth the ideal we have placed before us, can only come about by a spiritual change of our being and a radical and fundamental change an evolution or revolution of our nature. The embodied being upon earth would have to rise out of the domination over it of its veils of mind life and body into the full consciousness and possession of its spiritual reality and its nature also would have to be lifted out of the consciousness and power of consciousness proper to a mental vital and physical being into the greater consciousness and greater power of being and the larger and freer life of the spirit It would not lose these former veils but they would no longer be veils or imperfect expressions but true manifestations; they would be changed into states of light powers of spiritual life vehicles of a spiritual existence But this again could not be if mind life and body were not taken up and transformed by a state of being and a force of being superior to them, a power of Supermind as much above our incomplete mental nature as that is above the nature of animal life and animated Matter as it is immeasurably above the mere material nature

"The Supermind is in its very essence a truth-consciousness a consciousness always free from the Ignorance which is the foundation of our present natural or evolutionary existence and from which nature in us is trying to arrive at self knowledge and world-knowledge and a right consciouness and the right use of our existence in the universe The Supermind because it is a

nath."

(Rabindranath Tagore in 1928)

"*Sri Aurobindo is a great example of the intellectual robustness of mystical souls, whom we approach not so much to partake of their intellectual subtleties as to receive the word of life*

"Among the present-day Indian thinkers Sri Aurobindo is the most accomplished. His firm grasp of fundamentals of true philosophy his earnest attempt at the cultivation of the inner life and his abundant love for humanity and its future give to his writings a depth and a comprehensiveness which are rarely to be met with."

(S. Radhakrishnan)

Here comes Aurobindo, the completest synthesis that has been realized to this day of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe ... The last of the great Rishis holds in his hand, in firm unrelaxed grip the bow of creative energy"

(Romain Rolland)

"I consider 'The Divine Life' a book not merely of the highest importance as regards its content, but remarkably fine as a piece of philosophic and religious literature"

(Aldous Huxley)

I shall not restrict Sri Aurobindo's greatness to this age only. We have Plato Spinoza Kant and Hegel but they do not have the same all-embracing metaphysical structure they do not have the same vision"

(Dr Frederic Spiegelberg Standford University).

"Gandhi is one of the greatest saints. Tagore one of the greatest poets of modern India, but Sri Aurobindo is one of the greatest thinkers, indeed he has attained incomparable true greatness as poet, philosopher and saint."

(Raymond Frank Piper Ph. D. Prof. of Philosophy Syracuse University)

"Aurobindo is to me one of the greatest teachers of

something incurably gross and incapable of spiritual realisation or of spiritual use Matter itself is secretly a form of the spirit and has *to reveal itself* as that and can be made to awake to consciousness and evolve and realise the Spirit the Divine within it In my view the body as well as the mind and life has to be spiritualised or one may say divinised so as to be a fit instrument and receptacle for the realisation of the Divine It has its part in the Divine Lila even, according to the Vaishnava sadhana, in the joy and beauty of Divine Love

7 12 1949 *('Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 285)

APPENDIX VI

AS OTHERS SEE HIM

Notes—A few typical appreciations of Aurobindo and his Philosophy

"At the very first sight I could realise that he had been seeking for the soul and had gained it and through this long process of realisation had accumulated within him a silent power of inspiration. His face was radiant with an inner light and his serene presence made it evident to me that his soul was not crippled and cramped to the measure of some tyrannical doctrine which takes delight in inflicting wounds upon life

"I felt the utterance of the ancient Hindu Rishi spoke from him of that equanimity which gives the human soul its freedom of entrance into the All. I said to him You have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from you India will speak through your voice to the world, Hearken to me

"Years ago (1908) I saw Aurobindo in the atmosphere of his earlier heroic youth and I sang to him Aurobindo accept the salutations from Rabindranath Today I saw him in a deeper atmosphere of reticent richness of wisdom and again sang to him in silence 'Aurobindo accept the salutations from Rabindra

place and our ordinary mental comprehension, he was not only able to bring much of the Truth-knowledge into our current terms of knowing, but he inevitably became withdrawn and detached from the active world of man. Although the result of his work thus became more completely veiled from our outward-discerning judgement, we must not lose sight of the fact that in Sri Aurobindo's written works we have for these present times the widest and most comprehensive knowledge of the Divine Reality that the world has yet known. This was expressed in a clarity of thought that belongs neither to the obscure symbolical language nor the cryptic occult forms of the old esoteric schools. And whilst we still harbour any belief in the ultimate elevation of mankind, the place and value of that verbal gift to man must be increasingly recognized."

(Nathaniel Pearson in his *Sri Aurobindo and the Soul Quest of Man*)

APPENDIX VII

DARSHAN AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Note.—The Indians need know and experience Darshan. Here the impressions of Europeans need are given in brief

" ...But the saints purify you at sight"—"Mahabharata"

The following four days are allotted to Darshan for reasons shown against them.—

15th of August—The birthday of Sri Aurobindo.

24th of November—The day of victory for Aurobindo and the day of the founding of the Ashram.

21st of February—The birthday of Mother

24th of April—The coming of Mother to the Ashram.

Vincent Sheean, an American writer of note and author of "Lead Kindly Light" a book on Gandhi, has laboured hard in his book to find out the real significance of Darshan.

mankind today His wisdom surpasses intellectual knowledge and inspires efforts to reach contact with the life divine In a darkened age his message brings hope '

(Baron Palmstierena)
President, World Congress of Faiths.

"Aurobindo is no visionary He has always acted his dreams. 'Truth of philosophy he has said 'is of a merely theoretical value unless it can be lived an internationalist, not in a dreamy nor yet in a conventional manner, but by inner *compulsion, the compulsion of thought leading to an inevitable* conclusion. Long before others, he spoke of 'one world His final word is that we are whether we like it or not 'members one of another Unless we realise this truth and act upon it, we shall never have peace and goodwill on earth '

(*The London Times*, Literary Supplement.)

' If, therefore we are to judge Sri Aurobindo's work aright, we must see distinctly the two sides in which it appeared—that *which was inner and that which was the outer visible part.* In this setting the inner work belonged wholly to the Divine, and hence this part is the more difficult to discern—and made even more so by those whose eyes are habitually fixed on outward phenomena Also he never took upon himself any external demonstration to show the world proof of his Divine-directed work. Indeed such demonstrativeness would have detracted from his labour All we can say therefore is that time alone will reveal the truth of his Divine work in the world

"But although the inner spect of his work must as yet remain a closed book, what he did give to the world was a written record of that highest spiritual experience and God knowledge This was transcribed into the most comprehensible terms possible in both an elevated poetry as well as a precise and unerring prose so that those seeking the higher Light may be directly and progressively helped in their spiritual endea vour By his long-sustained poise between the Divine Truth

BIBLIOGRAPHY

All that Sri Aurobindo has written and spoken, published or unpublished, is worthy of study

Quite a number of books also in different languages, Indian as well as foreign, have been and are being published. Thus, "Aurobindiana" is daily growing.

I am giving below only a small list of books which have been of immediate use to me. In addition, I have named some which may be studied at leisure.

1. *Memoirs of My Life and Times* by Bipin Chandra Pal.
2. *The Soul of India* by Bipin Chandra Pal.
3. *Sri Aurobindo and Indian Freedom* by Sisir Kumar Mitra.
4. *The Renaissance in India* by C. F. Andrews.
5. *Indian Unrest* by Valentine Chirol.
6. *Government of India* by Ramsay MacDonald.
7. *Bankim, Tilak and Dayananda* by Aurobindo.
8. *The Life of Ramakrishna* by Romain Rolland.
9. *Biography of a New Faith* by P. K. Sen, Vol. I.
10. *Among the Great* by Dilip Kumar Roy.
11. *Sri Aurobindo* by Aurobindo Library, Madras.
12. *Sri Aurobindo Jiban As Tega* (Bengali) by Promod Kumar Sen.
13. *Sri Aurobindo Jiban Kathika* (Bengali) by Promod Kumar Sen.
14. *Sri Aurobindo* by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar.
15. *Sri Aurobindo ke Patra* (Hindi) by Aurobindo Grantha Mala, Pondicherry.
16. *Uttarpara Speech* by Aurobindo.
17. *Speeches of Sri Aurobindo* by Aurobindo.
18. *Kara Kahini* (Bengali) by Aurobindo.
19. *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram* by Arya Publishing House, Calcutta.

In connection with Sri Aurobindo and his "suffering" the Darshans, he writes, "At Pondicherry .. there lives the great sage philosopher and mystic named Aurobindo Ghose....they receive Darshan and are willing to travel very immense distances, very often on foot to get it Sri Aurobindo, a learned man whose knowledge of Western science and philosophy would appear, from his published writing to be as ample as his knowledge of the Hindu scriptures does not disdain this manifestation From his works (such as I have read) I am emboldened to say that he does not disdain it because he really understands it.

Sheean interprets Darshan as follows·—"Darshan in practice is a form of happiness induced among Hindus by being in the presence of some great manifestation of their collective consciousness. It may be person place or thing and represent past present or future so long as it sets up the definite recognizable glow of suprapersonal happiness.

(*Lead Kindly Light* by Vincent Sheean)

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All that Sri Aurobindo has written and spoken, published or unpublished, is worthy of study.

Quite a number of books also in different languages, Indian as well as foreign, have been and are being published. Thus, "Aurobindiana" is daily growing.

I am giving below only a small list of books which have been of immediate use to me. In addition, I have named some which may be studied at leisure.

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2. *The Soul of India* by Bipin Chandra Pal.
3. *Sri Aurobindo and Indian Freedom* by Sisir Kumar Mitra.
4. *The Renaissance in India* by C. F. Andrews.
5. *Indian Unrest* by Valentine Chirol.
6. *Government of India* by Ramsay MacDonald.
7. *Bankim, Tilak and Dayananda* by Aurobindo.
8. *The Life of Ramakrishna* by Romain Rolland.
9. *Biography of a New Faith* by P. K. Sen, Vol. I
10. *Among the Great* by Dilip Kumar Roy
11. *Sri Aurobindo* by Aurobindo Library Madras.
12. *Sri Aurobindo Jivan O Yoga* (Bengali) by Promod Kumar Sen
13. *Sri Aurobindo Jivan Kathika* (Bengali) by Promod Kumar Sen.
14. *Sri Aurobindo* by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar
15. *Sri Aurobindo ke Patra* (Hindi) by Aurobindo Grantha Mala, Pondicherry
16. *Uttarpara Speech* by Aurobindo.
17. *Speeches of Sri Aurobindo* by Aurobindo.
18. *Kara Kahini* (Bengali) by Aurobindo.
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20 *Yugantar* Bengali weekly, all issues

21 *Bande Mataram* English weekly and daily, all issues.

22 *Karmayogin* English weekly all issues.

23 *Dharma* Bengali weekly all issues.

24 *Arya* English monthly all issues.

25 *Mother India* English fortnightly from Bombay, all issues

26 *Mother India* English monthly, 16 issues from Feb 1952 to May 1953 Nov published from the Ashram

27 *Dakshina*, Gujerati quarterly 4 issues from Feb. to Nov 1951

28 *The Life Divine* by Aurobindo Vol I and Vol II

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43 *Letters of Sri Aurobindo* Series First to Fourth by Aurobindo

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45 *A System of National Education* by Aurobindo

46. *Thoughts from Sri Aurobindo*

47 *The Spirit and Form of Indian Polity* by Aurobindo

48 *Tales of All Time* by Mother

49 *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*

50. *On Education* by Mother

51. *Aurobindo Came to Me* by Dilip Kumar Roy
52. *Lights on the Veda* by Kapali Shastri.
53. *Lights on the Upanishads* by Kapali Shastri.
54. *Sri Aurobindo Lights on the Teachings* by Kapali Shastri.
55. *The Coming Race* by Nolini Kanto Gupta.
56. *Towards a New Society* by Nolini Kanto Gupta.
57 *The Nature of the Universe* by Fred Hoyle.
58. *Philosophies of India* by H. R. Zimmer
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ARAVINDA (S)—Sanskrit word for lotus. Christian name of Sri Aurobindo. In Bengali this is pronounced as Aurobindo.

ARYA SAMAJ (S)—A reforming sect among the Hindus who stand generally for a Vedic revival. Swami Dayanand was the founder

ASEXUALITY (E)—The state of being above the sense of having any sex.

ASHRAM (S)—Hermitage. It is usually used as a centre for penance, sadhana, education or social service.

ASHRAMVAS (S)—Stay in an Ashram.

ASHTANGA YOGA (S)—The eight fold Yoga system of Patanjali.

ASHTA SIDDHI (S)—The eight attainments such as lightness, heaviness, invisibility etc. which are said to be the usual results of success in Yoga.

ASSUMPTION (E)—Reception of Mary mother of Christ, in Heaven observed by Christians on the 15th of August every year

ATMAN (S)—The soul, the self, the central coordinating principle of consciousness.

ATMAPRATISHTHA (S)—Firm establishment of the self

ATMASIDDHI (S)—Realisation of the Self.

AUM, also spelt OM (S)—The sound-symbol of the highest Reality It is used for meditation.

AURO (S)—Diminutive of Aurobindo, fondly used by his relatives and nearest friends.

B

BAIRAGI (H)—One who has renounced a Sannyasi.

BANDE MATARAM (S)—I bow to the Mother (country). A song of that name originally occurs in "Anandmath" of

GLOSSARY

Meanings only of such words as have not been explained in the text are given below

Abbreviations in brackets —
S for Sanskrit
H for Hindi
E for English

A

ABSOLUTE (E)—Supreme Brahman (i.e Parabrahman the absolute of Western metaphysics) is that which presents itself to the mind as void of all relations and determinations the Ineffable, first and last word of existence Absolute must be indeterminable at the same time source of all determination, and yet beyond them and unbound by them.

ADISHAKTI (S)—Primordial Energy

ADVAITA (S)—Monism, the theory that Reality is one and indivisible

AGAMA (S)—Hindu scriptures usually other than Vedas such as Shaivagama, Shaktagama Pancharatra and others. Vedas are usually called Nigamas.

AGAMIC (S)—Belonging to Agama.

AMALKI (S)—A tree of that name with sour round and hard fruit.

ANAND (S)—The essential delight of existence

ANANDMATH (S)—A Bengali novel by Bankim Chandra. Literally, a monastry of joy

ANUSHEELAN SAMITI (S)—A study group.

ARATIRJANASAMSADI (S)—Want of attachment or interest

for assembly of people Crowd shyness.

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Bankim Chandra. It became the national song of India since 1905-06, and now has equal status with the National Anthem.

BEING-BECOMING (E)—The dual aspect of Reality

BHAGWAN (S)—The Lord (literally the glorious one)

BHAGWATI-SHAKTI (S)—The Energy of Power of the Goddess

BHAKTI YOGA (S)—Yoga in which devotion is the prime factor

BHARATIYA (S)—Belonging to Bharat i.e. India.

BHAVAN (S)—Abode house

BHASHYA (S)—Commentary

BHASHYAKAR (S)—Commentator such as Shankara Ramanuja, Madhwa, and so on.

BRAHAN (S)—Big one

BRAHMA (S)—*Creator, the first of the Trinity: Brahma* (Creator) Vishnu (Protector) and Mahesh (destroyer)

BRAHMACHARYA (S)—Continence, celibacy, the discipline for attaining the Truth or Brahman

BRAHMAN (S)—The Absolute, independent of every thing else but governing pervading and constituting all relations. It is Omnipresent. Brahman is at once void of qualities and capable of infinite qualities. He is the Lord Doer of work yet the non-doer and the silent witness of the working of Nature

BRAHMARSHI (S)—Brahma Rishi the Rishi who has realised Brahman—the absolute

BRAHMASHRI (S)—Brahma Shri, honorific title for a great *man of Vedic learning*

BRAHMA TEJ (S)—Power derived from the knowldge of Brahman. Spiritual power

BRAHMA VIDYA (S)—Knowledge of Brahman—the Reality

BRAHMIN (S)—One belonging to Brahman Varna of caste

BRAHMO-SAMAJ (S)—A reforming sect among Hindus foun

ded by Devendranath Tagore. They believe in the Upanishadic teaching but are against ritualism, caste system, and many of the social customs.

BUDDHISM (E)—The teaching of Buddha (Mahayana and Hinayana) are two schools of Buddhism which developed later

C

CARBONARI (E)—Secret political revolutionary society in Italy organised first in Naples.

CHATUH-SOOTRI (S) Fourfold (literally four-stringed)

CHIT (S)—Consciousness in general.

CHITTA (S)—The mind, the individualised consciousness.

CHIT-SHAKTI (S)—The power of Consciousness.

CHRIST (E)—Reflection of God.

CONGRESS (E)—The Indian National Congress founded in 1885.

CONSCIOUSNESS (E)—The faculty of becoming aware of anything through identification. Before its emergence, consciousness is already concealed in the Inconscient waiting for evolution, and when all is ready it breaks out from its prison of apparent Inconscience. Consciousness is the creator of this world from apparent Inconscience. The original freedom enables it also to withdraw from what it has created and recreate it in the formula of a higher Truth. Consciousness has an aspect of Impersonality but it has no standing place if there is none who is conscious

COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS (E)—That in which one is aware of the universal self, the play of the cosmic forces and the interaction of the planes of consciousness in their universal extension.

CONSCIOUSNESS (GOD) (E)—A person's consciousness of

God as being everywhere

CONSCIOUSNESS (INDIVIDUAL) (I) — Consciousness canalised in an individual and therefore limited to him and personality

D

DAKSHINESHWAR (S) — A suburb of Calcutta where in a Kali temple Ramakrishna Paramhansa lived and worshipped and carried on Sadhana

DANCE (OF SHIVA) (I) — This is called Tandava or the cosmic dance of creation preservation and destruction Shiva in that pose is called Nataraja—the dancing Lord, or the Lord of dancing

DARSHAN (S) — Vision or seeing persons or things with attention and reverent eyes.

DANDA (H) — An exercise in which a person rests horizontally on palms and toes of his feet and moves down and up.

DAKSHINA (S) — Fees paid to priest for his duties.

DEVA SANGHA (S) — Association or body of people attempting to live life divine

DHARMATMA (S) — A religious soul

DHOTI (H) — The long cotton piece worn round the waist in India.

DISINTERESTED WORK — Work done with the sole motive of doing as best as one can the duties dictated by conscience.

DIVINE GROUND (I) — That Reality in which, by which and on account of which everything exists.

DRASHTA (S) — Seer one who sees the Vedic Mantras and gives utterance to them

E

ELAN VITAL (French) The current or gush of life

ENERGY (E)—That which seems to create and move matter though it is, in fact, itself the substance of matter Energy appears as matter Energy is sometimes—called Universal Nature which produces the world. The Infinite indeterminate existence reveals itself as Energy which is known by its works. Energy without a being possessing it or a consciousness supporting it, looks like a mental construction, an unreality

EXISTENCE-CONSCIOUSNESS-BLISS (E) — This is the equivalent of Sat-Chit Anand in Sanskrit.

G

GITA (S)—India's most important and authoritative sacred book which synthesises the spiritual, philosophical and moral teaching of all earlier scriptures.

GRAMMAR SCHOOL (E)—Secondary school.

GURU (S)—Spiritual teacher

H

HATHA-YOGA (S)—The system of Yoga in which the vital powers are sought to be brought under control mainly by Pranayam, Asanas, Mudras and Kriyas

HATHA-YOGI (S)—One practised in Hatha Yoga.

HIMAVAT HIMALAYAS—The range of highest mountains in the world to the north of India.

HOMA (S)—The ceremony of sacrifice in the sacred fire lit for the purpose.

I

I C.S (E)—Indian Civil Service.

INCONSCIENT (E)—All upon earth is based on the Inconscient, as it is called, though it is not inconscient at all but rather suppressed or involved consciousness, in which there is everything but nothing is formulated or expressed We see an Inconscience, a total Nescience as the base and beginning of things. Nature is mechanical because of veil of Inconscience The Inconscient is self oblivion self-opposition self limitation by the Infinite and the Ignorance that we see is the process of surpassing that step by step

INDEPENDENCE DAY (E)—India attained independence on 15 8 47 That day is celebrated as Independence Day

INDIAN MAJLIS (E)—Indian Association (in Cambridge University)

INNER GOD—God enthroned in the heart

INTROVERT-CONCENTRATION (F)—Introspective concentration on the Self—the Atman

INVOLUTION (F)—Process of the spirit being involved with a view to creation. Process which is opposite of evolution.

ISHTA DEVATA (S)—Particular god or goddess who is chosen by a devotee for personal worship and devotion

ISHWARA (S)—Lord Creator and Governor

J

JAINISM (F)—The cult of the jains This was founded by the Teerthankaras or Prophets, last of whom was Mahavir a contemporary of Budha. Ahimsa is to them the highest religion and duty

JANA GANA MANA (S)—The first three words of the Indian

national Anthem, which is a composition by Rabindranath Tagore

JATA-MATA TATA-PATHA (Bengali)—As many ways (to God) as there are opinions.

JEEVANMUKTI (S)—Liberation of the self during life.

JNAN-YOGA (S)—The system of Yoga in which the Reality is sought to be realised through purified intellect.

K

KALA (S)—The time element.

KALI (S)—The principle of evil, the last and worst of the four yugas or ages according to Hindu scriptures: Krita, Treta, Dwapara and Kali.

KAMA (S)—Desire sensual desire, the god of love.

KARMA (S)—Action, work. It is eternal and gives rise to reaction and binds the doer unless it is without attachment and without the desire for its fruit.

KARMA-YOGA (S)—The system of Yoga in which all necessary action or duty is done with detachment both for it and its fruit, and with a spirit of dedication to God.

KAVI (S)—The poet the man of learning, one who sees truth.

KRISHNA (S)—The eighth incarnation of Vishnu, the Greatest character in the Mahabharata and preacher of the Gita.

KRITU (S)—Determination, firm decision.

KRIYAVAN (S)—A doer of things, man of action.

KSHATRATTJ (S)—The spirit and quality of being militant in defence of good causes.

KUDTA (H)—A simple shirt.

KUNDALINI-YOGA (S)—The system of Yoga in which the Serpent power (the secret power in the spinal column) is sought to be awakened by Pranayam, Asanas and concentration

L

LATHI (H)—A long staff carried as a stick.

LAYA YOGA (S)—The system of Yoga in which the individual consciousness is sought to be merged in the universal by meditation

LILA (also LEELA) (S)—Sport joyful play the spirit of playfulness.

LIFE (E)—Matter Life Mind are the three realised powers of the evolution Life is not an original reality but is yet a form a power of it When Life manifests it is involved in Matter Matter is the basis of life life a form of cosmic energy a dynamic movement a play of the Force which builds up forms energises them by an unceasing process of disintegration and renewal Life has three realms —the material the vegetable the animal Movement breathing and eating are only processes of life not life itself

LOKAMANYA (S)—One who is respected by the people Tilak the patriot (passed away in 1920)

LOTUS AND DAGGER (E)—Name of still born secret society founded in England about 1891 to fight for Indian independence

M

MAHABHARAT (S)—The massive Sanskrit epic of about 100,000 verses compiled in the present form at the beginning of the Christian era by Vyas

MAHA SAMADHI (S)—Passing away of some great soul the final merger of the individual being into the universal Being

MAHAYOGI (S)—The great Yogi

MAHIMNA STOTRA (S)—Songs in praise of God Shiva

MANIFESTATION (E)—Concrete expression of what exists as energy or power

MANTRA (S)—Mystic words or verses used for meditation, words or verses pregnant with power and effect.

MANTRA-YOGA (S)—The system of Yoga in which Mantra is used for gaining full control over consciousness.

MATTER (E)—A form of the Spirit, a habitation of the Spirit. There can be realisation of Spirit in matter itself.

MAYA (S)—Illusion, power to create illusion, power of creation.

MIND (E)—Matter Life Mind these three are the three terms of cosmic evolution. The nature of the mind as we know it, is an Ignorance seeking for knowledge; it is a power of fractions and a worker of divisions striving to arrive at a sum, to piece together a whole; It is not possessed of the essence of things or their totality Mind, when it is—first beginning to function, is involved in action, in satisfying vital and physical needs. But when it grows in man, then there is a first hope of understanding, discovery and comprehension.

MOKSHA (S)—Release (of the soul) salvation liberation.

MOTHER (India)—India is often spoken of as Mother India. Bharat Mata.

MOTHER (Ashram)—Mira Richard is looked upon as Mother and is addressed most reverently as Mother

MUKTA KARMA (S)—Action without attachment, free action.

MUKTI (S)—Moksha, Release liberation.

N

NARA AND NARAYANA (S)—Man or son of Man and God.

NIGRAHA—(S)—Suppression.

NIRGUNA-BRAHMAN (S)—Brahman beyond the three Gunas of Sattva, Raja and Tamas. The Reality beyond

L

LATHI (H)—A long staff carried as a stick

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PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY (E)—Philosophy that holds true at all times.

PRAKRITI (S)—Nature, the creatrix, the active principle in contrast to Purusha who is pure inactive consciousness often likened to a mirror

PRANAYAM (S)—Science of breath-control.

PRARABDHA (S)—That (Karma) which has begun and become operative.

PRARTHANA SAMAJ (S)—Prototype of Brahmo Samaj in Western India. Prarthana is prayer

PUCCA—Perfect Complete.

PURANA (S)—Mythical or legendary stories in Sanskrit woven round traditions or tales floating in racememory There are eighteen Puranas.

PURANIC OR PAURANIC (S)—Belonging to Puranas.

PURNA YOGA (S)—Integral Yoga initiated by Aurobindo

PURUSHOTTAM (S)—The Divine Person in whom Being as well as Becoming Spirit as well as Matter find their synthesis.

Q

QUIT INDIA (E)—Slogan by Gandhi started in 1942 in India, asking Britain to quit.

R

RAJA-YOGA (S)—The system of Yoga in which the main attempt is to still the mind by stopping all its modifications so that it may reflect Reality

RAMAYANA—The great epic about the story of Rama.

RASA (S)—Principle of taste that which is enjoyable in art and aesthetics

REALISATION (E)—(In Integral Yoga) The establishment

attributes and relativity

NIRVANA (S)—The state of final release according to Buddha.

NISHKAMA (KARMA) (S)—Without desire, without desire for the fruit of ones action.

NISHPANDA—(S)—Without any vibration.

O

OJAS (S)—Spiritual and moral lustre and power as different from physical power and brightness.

OM (S)—Same as AUM

OVERMIND (E)—The plane of concrousness beyond individual mind beyond even universal mind in ignorance —it carries in itself a first direct masterful cognition of cosmic truth

P

PADMASAN (S)—A particular kind of sitting pose called lotus pose in Yoga

PAGLER SANGE PAGLI (Bengali)—Mad along with a mad man

PAGLI MA (H)—Mad mother

PARA BRAHMAN (S)—Brahman beyond all the supreme Brahman

PARA DHARMA (S)—Another's religion duty belonging to another category of people

PARAMATMAN (S)—The Great Atman

PARTITION (E)—Splitting of Bengal into two divisions

PATANJALA YOGA SUTRAS (S)—The Yoga aphorisms written by Patanjali.

PATANJALI (S)—The name of the sage who wrote Yoga aphorisms

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RASA (S)—Principle of taste that which is enjoyable in art and aesthetics.

REALISATION (E)—(In Integral Yoga) The establishment

of the Supramental truth upon earth

RELIGIO-MYSTIC (E)—Half religious and half mystic a combination of both

RIG VEDA (S)—The first Veda, the name of that Veda the earliest religious and poetic composition by man of which there is record

RIK (S)—A verse in Rig veda is called a Rik.

RISHI (S)—A seer a composer of the Vedas

RITAM (S)—The right in contrast to wrong

S

SABHA (S)—An assembly a meeting

SACHCHIDANANDA (S)—Sat chit Ananda the Reality is described as Truth Consciousness joy all in one

SADHANA (S)—Spiritual discipline for attaining self realisation.

SADHANANAM ANEKATA (S)—Variety and manifoldness of Sadhanas.

SADHAK (S)—One who follows Sadhana, a spiritual aspirant.

SAD-ATMAN (S)—The ever-existing Atman

SAHITIS (S) Litterateurs

SAHA DHARMINI (S)—Lady who follows same path of duty or religion as the husband a wife

SAHAJA SAMADHI (S)—Samadhi which is natural Samadhi which becomes second nature effortless Samadhi.

SAMADHI (S)—Communion of self with Self the attunement of the individual with the universal consciousness.

SANATANA DHARMA (S)—the eternal religion, the perennial religion

SANGH (S)—Organisation association.

SANKHYA (S)—A system of philosophy which says that the universe is the play of 24 things (padarthas) which together constitute Prakriti in the presence of inactive

mirrorlike Purusha.

SANNYASIN (S)—One who has renounced the world.

SARASWATI (S)—The goddess of learning, aesthetics and wisdom.

SATTWIC (S)—Pertaining to Sattva which is one of the Gunas and which is characterised by purity light and balance.

SAVIKALPA-SAMADHI (S)—Samadhi in which there is cognition of some concept

SAVITRI (S)—Epic of his spiritual life by Aurobindo woven round the Puranic story of Savitri and Satyavan.

SELF-CONSCIOUS (E)—Conscious of self and all that pertains to it.

SHAKTI (S)—Power Force, the Goddess of Power

SHAKUNTALA (S)—The drama of that name by Kalidasa, the name of the heroine of that drama.

SHASTRA (S)—Science, the scriptures that lay down rules of conduct.

SHISHYA (S)—Disciple.

SIDDHA (S)—One who has attained spiritual self-realisation.

SIDHHA-YOGI (S)—A perfect Yogi.

SIDHHAROODHA (S)—One who is steady and firm in his Sidhhi.

SIDHHI (S)—Full attainment, perfection, spiritual realisation.

SMRITIKAR (S)—Writer of Smritis (written from memory) which are next in authority to the Shrutis or Vedas.

SOMA (S)—Drink of the gods, a kind of health-giving mild wine.

SPIRIT (E)—The antithesis of matter which is impersonal, eternal and universal. Spirit as Purusha puts on a more personal aspect. Purusha is the Spirit (i.e. the Conscious Being) in its relation to Nature. The Purusha is the Self, originator witness, support, lord and enjoyer of the forms and works of Nature. In each status of the gradation of Nature, Spirit takes the poise proper to

of the Supramental truth upon earth.

RELIGIO-MYSTIC (E)—Half religious and half mystic, a combination of both.

RIG-VEDA (S)—The first Veda, the name of that Veda, the earliest religious and poetic composition by man of which there is record.

RIK (S)—A verse in Rig-veda is called a Rik.

RISHI (S)—A seer, a composer of the Vedas.

RITAM (S)—The right in contrast to wrong.

S

SABHA (S)—An assembly, a meeting.

SACHCHIDANANDA (S)—Sat-chit-Ananda, the Reality is described as Truth-Consciousness-joy all in one.

SADHANA (S)—Spiritual discipline for attaining self-realisation.

SADHANANAM ANEKATA (S)—Variety and manifoldness of Sadhanas.

SADHAK (S)—One who follows Sadhana, a spiritual aspirant.

SAD-ATMAN (S)—The ever-existing Atman.

SAHITIS (S) Litterateurs.

SAHA DHARMINI (S)—Lady who follows same path of duty or religion as the husband, a wife.

SAHAJA SAMADHI (S)—Samadhi which is natural, Samadhi which becomes second nature, effortless Samadhi.

SAMADHI (S)—Communion of self with Self, the attunement of the individual with the universal consciousness.

SANATANA DHARMA (S)—the eternal religion, the perennial religion.

SANGH (S)—Organisation, association.

SANKHYA (S)—A system of philosophy which says that the universe is the play of 24 things (padarthas) which together constitute Prakriti, in the presence of inactive,

mirrorlike Purusha.

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that gradation, in mind in life and in matter

SRI-SHRI (S)—The Goddess of wealth, Laxmi glory splendour an abbreviation of Shriman used as Mister or Monsieur

SRIMATI (S)—Female counterpart of Shriman.

STATE, STATES (E)—Before independence 560 and odd Pricipalities in India which were under the princes.

SUB-CONSCIENT (E)—Can be felt anywhere —felt as something below the movement of the consciousness and in a way supporting it from beneath or else drawing the consciousness down towards itself The subconscient is the main support of all habitual movements, especially of the physical and lower vital movements. When something is thrown out of the vital or physical it very usually goes down into the subconscient and remains there as if in seed and comes up again when it can.

SUB-CONSCIOUS (E)—That which is next to and below our waking consciousness but of which we are not normally conscious.

SUB-LIMINAL (E)—It is true that the subliminal in man is the largest part of his nature and has in it the secret of the unseen dynamisms which explain his surface activities.

SUPERMIND (E)—*Is the instrumentation of the Satchidanand*, the Infinite consciousness higher than the mental being Its evolution here is an inevitable necessity It is a Self awareness of the Infinite and Eternal and a power of Self-determination inherent in the Self-awareness. Supermind keeps always and in every status and condition the Spiritual realisation of the unity of all. It is the consciousness creatrix of the world a will to light and vision and also a will to power of works. It is the vastness beyond the ordinary firmament of our consciousness, vast all-comprehension, the true the right

the vast, (Satyam, Ritam, Brihat). Supermind is the Light, one with Force, vibration of knowledge and with the rhythm of the will. It is Truth-consciousness.

SUPRA-CONSCIOUS (E)—Conscious of things above our normal consciousness.

SUPRAMENTAL (E)—Beyond mental, belonging to Supermind.

SWADESHI MOVEMENT (E)—As a protest against the partition of Bengal by the British Government, movement for use of indigenous things and boycott of British manufactures. (1905).

SWADHARMA (S)—One's own law of being, one's own religion.

SWARAJYA (S)—One's own rule, Home rule, self rule.

T

TAMAS (S)—Darkness, Inertia, ignorance.

TAPAS (S)—Penance, intense concentration, consciousness.

TAPASYA (S)—Exercise involving Tapas.

TIRTHANKAR (S)—according to Jainism one who has attained perfection (Twenty four are mentioned, the last being Mahavir)

TRANSCENDENT (E)—That which is (1) above the cosmos, not included in the universal manifestation, (2) above our cosmos of mind, life and body. In that sense the supramental is part of the Transcendent. The word has a relative, not an absolute significance

TRUTH CONSCIOUSNESS (E)—The same as Supramental consciousness

U

UNCONSCIOUS (E)—That part of consciousness which is be-

that gradation, in mind, in life and in matter

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W

WILL (E)—The power of consciousness turned towards effectuation: It is consciousness applying itself to work and a result. The active aspect of consciousness is will.

Y

YAJNA (S)—Sacrifice, conscious renunciation and dedication of the lower for the higher

YOGA (S)—Spiritual discipline which prescribes concentration and exclusive contemplation for attaining the highest self-perfection.

YOGA-MAYA (S)—God's power of Yoga by which he creates and destroys universes.

YOGAROODHA (S)—One who has attained success in Yoga and is firmly established in it.

YOGA SYSTEM (E)—System of spiritual discipline known as Yoga.

YOGA-SUTRA (S)—Yoga aphorisms.

YOGA-VASISHTHA (S)—A book on Vedanta and Yoga by that name.

YOGA VIDHI (S)—The technique of Yoga.

YOGEESHWAR (S)—The master Yogi.

YOGESHWAR (S)—The Lord of Yoga, Krishna is called by that name

YOGI (S)—One ersed in Yoga.

yond the self-conscious and the sub-conscious regions, not conscious.

UPANISHAD (S)—The end portions of Vedas in which philosophy of life and spirituality is the main subject

UTTARPARA (S)—A suburb of Calcutta where Aurobindo made his famous speech (30-5-1909) after a few days of his release from Alipore Jail.

UTSAHA (S)—Enthusiasm, the will to go ahead

V

VAISHNAVA (S)—Belonging to Vishnu devotee of Vishnu

VARNA (S)—Colour The four main classes into which originally Hindu society was divided

VASUDEVA (S)—Lord Vishnu in the Krishna incarnation

VEDA (S)—The most authoritative revealed scripture of the Hindus. The four recognised ones are Rigveda, Yajur veda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda

VEDANTA (S)—Name of Hindu philosophy so called because it is enunciated in the end portions of the Vedas

VEDANTA KESARI (S)—The lion of Vedanta.

VEDIC (S)—Belonging to Veda.

VIDEHA MUKTI (S)—Liberation when the soul has left the body, freedom from cycle of rebirths.

VIDEHA MUKTA (S)—One liberated as defined above

VIDYA (S)—Learning the total wisdom

VIJNANA (S)—Supermind science

VIKRAMORVASHI (S)—Name of a drama by Kalidasa It is so named because of Vikram and Urvashi the hero and heroine

VRITTI (S)—Modifications of the mind-stuff or of individual consciousness.

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WILL (E)—The power of consciousness turned towards effectuation: It is consciousness applying itself to work and a result. The active aspect of consciousness is will.

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YOGI (S)—One versed in Yoga.